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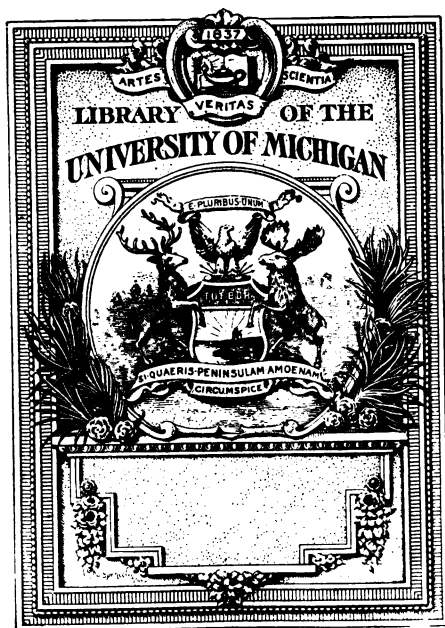
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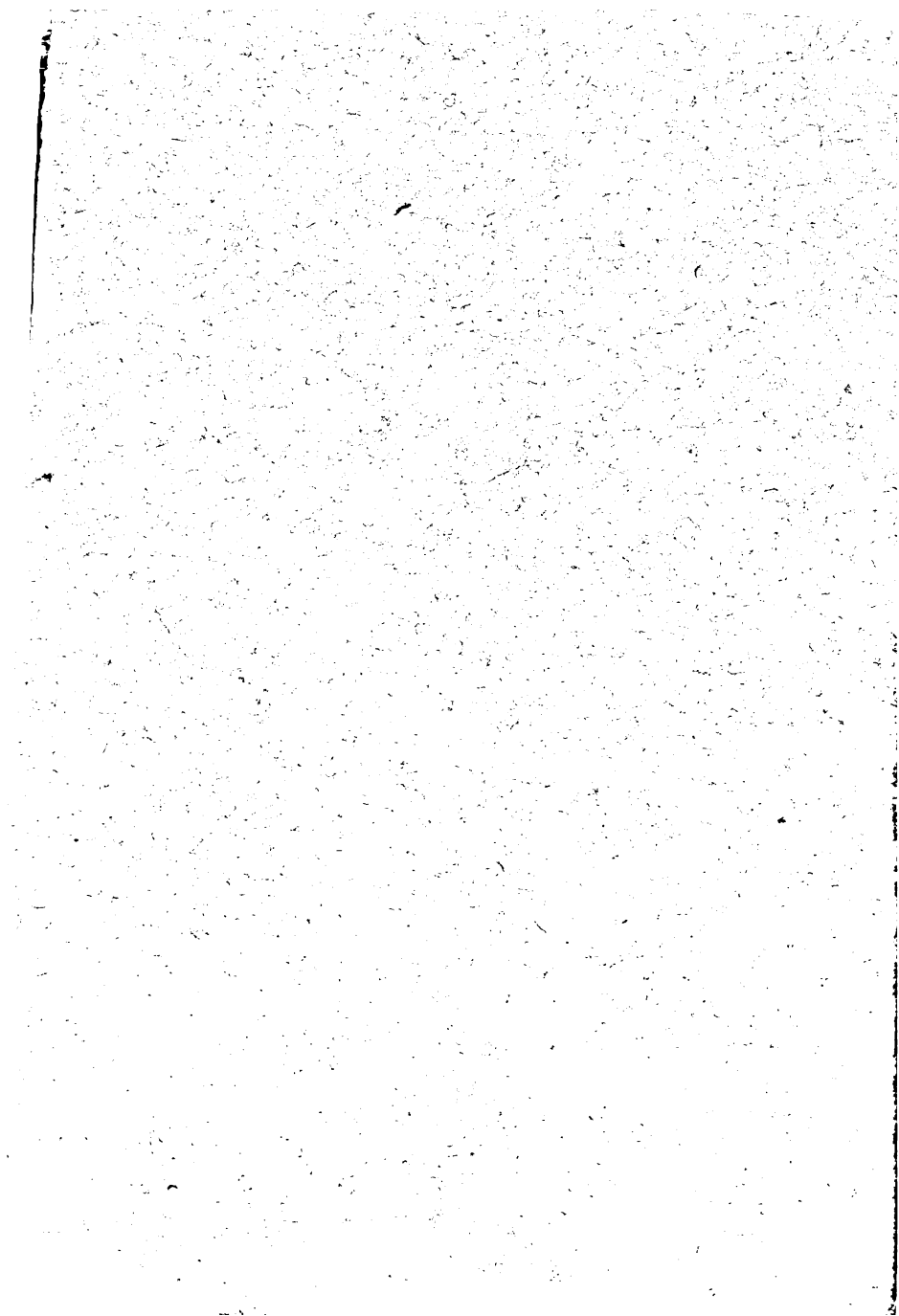
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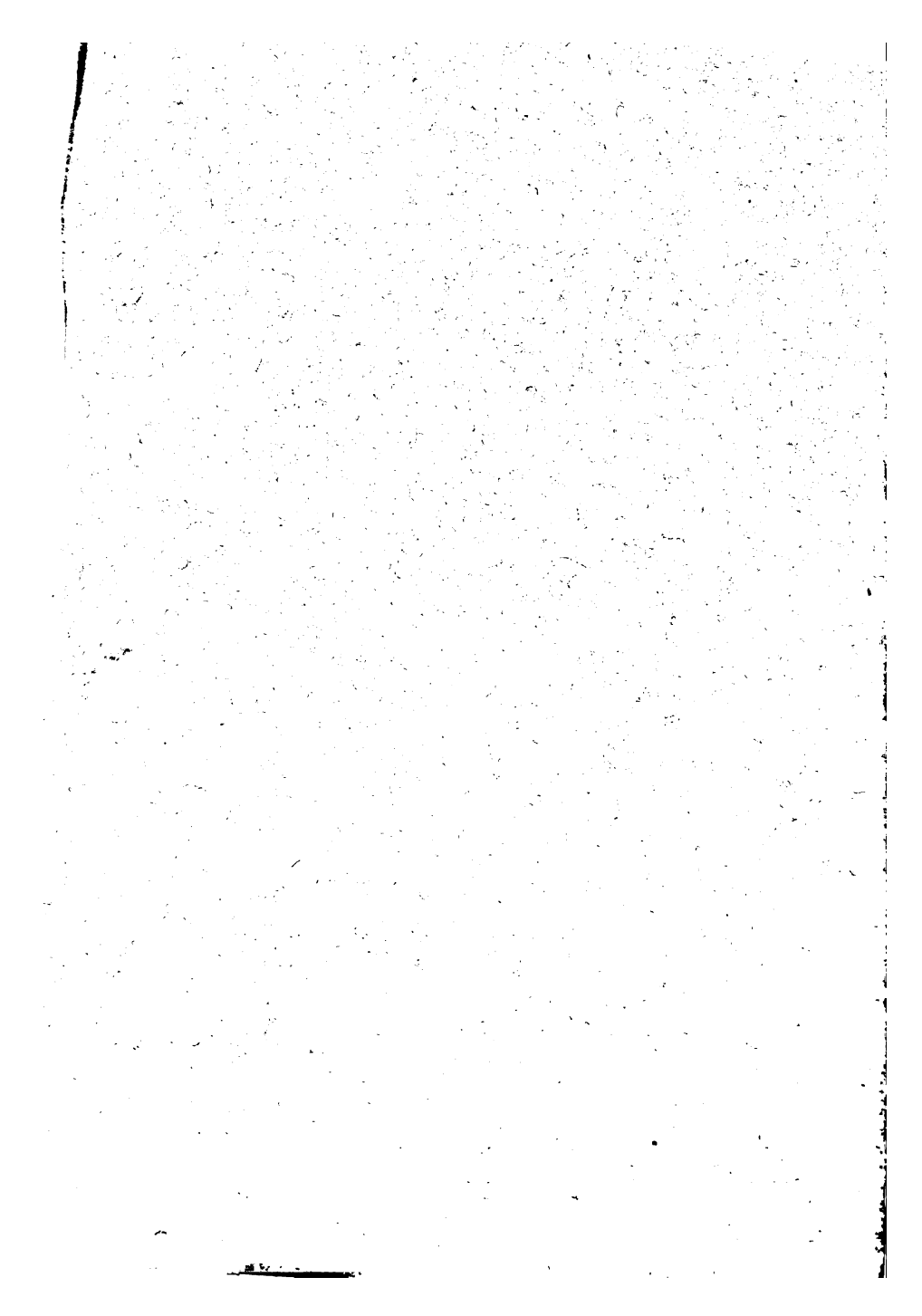


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THE ROMANCE OF A MIDSHIPMAN

THE ROMANCE OF A MIDSHIPMAN

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

Author of "The Lady Maud," "What Cheer," "The Wreck of the
'Grosvenor'"



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THE ROMANCE OF A MIDSHIPMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRIEST.

I WAS born at Bouville, a little dusky seaport situated on the French coast betwixt Brest and placid old Calais. One long pier strikes fang-like with a flash into the breaches of the sea, and the wild play of foam makes a light for that gray and gloomy harbor. The gloom is in the black timbers of pier, in the dark green sheathing of seaweed, in an appearance of darkness in the water where it spreads its inmost extremity.

Bouville is full of churches. It may be that in my time you might count one for every hundred head of man and woman. Better for the inhabitants if their spires were of commerce, and smoked; but the weather-cock darts a flame as it revolves, and is an ornament in the air. The harbor is the pleasantest part. I always thought it so when a boy. I was fascinated by the clumsy black smacks, and their huge chocolate lugs, and their deck-loads of gabbling, sprawling men, and noisy, gesticulating women, in immense caps and shining earrings. These poor people are very devout. I once walked in the tail of a procession when the priests went to the end of the pier to bless the sea on behalf of the smackmen; and that night it blew a gale of wind and five smacks foundered in mid-channel, and three came steaming into Bouville in the afternoon, torn and broken like women ragged in raiment flying with

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loosened hair, and two, grinding against each other in the heavy fret in the harbor, sank at their moorings, and five men were strangled below. The sea is superior to human blessings.

Into this harbor, when I was a boy, there used to sail with freights of coal and other cargo little grimy brigs and brigantines from the north of England. It was a pretty sight after a wet night early in the morning when the sun shone brilliantly, to see the vessels with their canvas hanging and drying, and smoke merrily feathering from their little cooking chimneys. Then you tasted the flavor of red herring in the air, and if you waited for yonder smack to arrive alongside, she would expose a hold filled with the quicksilver of mackerel.

My mother had been married six years when I was born, and as I was her first and only child, I consider that my birth was a little out of the common; and perhaps something that might be thought extraordinary attended it. An English monthly nurse had been hired; she came with a good recommendation from the doctor. She was tall and lean, and her life had not been sweet, but she knew her business. I was born at eight o'clock in the evening, and at two o'clock next morning the nurse lay dead of heart disease, or something that suddenly took her, on a mattress by my mother's bedside, with her arm across my throat as I lay in my blanket by her. My mother slept. That I did not die of suffocation is due to God; in fact, I am convinced I was not born to be suffocated.

When my mother awoke and called the nurse and got no answer, she pulled the bell-rope at the head of her bed, and continued to ring, till my father rushed in, followed by a couple of terrified French servants.

"The nurse is dead!" muttered my mother in the extremity of her distress; "and baby is dead too by her side!"

My father lifted the dead woman's arm and saw that I

was black in the face ; but in a minute I let fly a cry, and then my face cleared, and so I daresay did my mother's. My father put me by her side, and he and the maids carried the dead woman down-stairs. Her place until next day was taken by one of the French girls. This was perhaps the narrowest escape I ever had in my life, though it had happened to me, so to speak, scarcely before I had come fairly into life.

I was christened Walter after my father, and as Walter Longmore, I make my bow to you. Our house was an old cottage situated on the north border of the town hard by a rich small wood, through which ran a clear crystal brook full of minnows, which, when a little boy, I used to fish for with crooked pins and earth-worms, and though no angler was more patient, I never caught one. My father had been induced to take this house partly because his means were small, and he had been told that Bouville was a cheap place to live in, and partly because of my mother's health, which had been delicate, and one or two London doctors assured him that Bouville would give her the air she needed. It was a romantic little cottage, and from its garret window you could see a white streak of channel water between two horns of land. Whenever I smell sweet lavender that house comes before me, for its atmosphere was very subtly charged with that delicate aroma or something like it.

We had two large gardens ; in the lower one there had long before our time been dug out a great pond about twelve feet deep. How it was kept filled I do not recollect. The water was filthy, and full of tittlebats and frogs and creatures as beautiful and fearful as the Ancient Mariner saw swimming amidst the fires in the ship's shadow. It was protected by an old green railing with two gates, and in the middle of it was a pedestal to support a statue for a fountain. It was without a statue, and it was an old forlorn pond whose water had been quickened by neglect into

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hundreds of strange swimming shapes, many of them reposing on the mud as the sea-serpent dwells at the bottom of the unfathomable deep, but they rose to the stones I throw, and some of them used to wriggle into my dreams, and despatch me with running eyes, by the light of the oil-float, to my nurse's bed.

The romance of my life began not *with* this pond, but *in* it.

My father was a tall gentlemanly-looking man with small gray side-whiskers and a clear, gray, humorous eye. He looked a dignified figure in his buttoned-up frock-coat, high stock, and stand-up collars and glasses dangling upon his breast. He and my mother agreed perfectly, which was due probably to my father being a man of very easy temper and to my mother holding no strong opinions on any subject good or bad. Perhaps there was a disposition on my father's part to talk a little freely on religious matters before me. He might suppose I was too young to understand him; but a child is a very artful, knowing, and attentive creation. "Boys begin to tell lies at three," says Paley, "and girls at two." What my father believed in I do not know. I remember him saying one day to my mother, turning from the window at which he had been silently standing, "I have faith in God, and in the revelation of the grave. No man need go beyond that." If he was anything he was a Unitarian.

My mother was a Churchwoman, and every Sunday, when I was old enough, punctually saw us at our devotions in a little Protestant Church. My heart melts when I recall my mother lifting me on to the seat, and putting a corner of the hymn-book into my hand, and whispering to me to sing with her. The harmonium in the loft was old and badly played, but the congregation lifted up very hearty, cheerful voices, and piety supplied the place of art. The English Churchman is usually very churchish abroad; the sentiment of roast beef is in his fervor; he has much

admiration for all that is British when he is at a distance from it.

My parents did not send me to school until I was nine. They both agreed that a young boy's brain does not settle into a condition for the proper reception of ideas until he is nine years old. I therefore grew up in ignorance and idleness, saving that my mother taught me to read and write a little, and like the youth in the poem, I was a lonely boy. But I enjoyed plenty of liberty and never knew what solitude was. I would lie for an hour on my back in a summer field, and watch the large white clouds come sailing up from the sea over the blue sky, and fancy I could perceive a painting, very dim and visionary, of distant gorgeous lands upon their soft breasts of snow. I dried clover and smoked it, and I also smoked cane. I was allowed ten sous a week, and this money I spent upon huge and gorging sweets called *tablettes*. They were made by an old woman who kept a stall in a cottage door, and I would watch her shaping them with great impatience if she had none in stock. With skinny hands she drew the mess of treacle, butter and other matters into yellow skeins, then dumped it very cleverly in a solid dollop upon a board. She cut with wonderful precision, and every piece was a good sou's worth. Warm or cold they were all the same to me ; I shall never taste their like again.

I wonder I did not perish at this time of my life of family indifference, for I went where I pleased and did as I pleased, and when I came home—for like all poor relations I was punctual in turning up—nobody asked me where I had been or what I had been doing. I slightly shudder when I think of myself as a small boy in a Holland blouse, belt, drawers, bare legs, socks and shoes, in charge of a boat all alone on the river. That the boat owner should have trusted me with a wherry is extraordinary ; that I ever paid him I cannot believe, as I devoted all my money to the old woman who made the large, square,

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yellow sweets. But never was I so happy as when I was in a boat. I would hoist the little sail, keep the sheet in my hand according to the directions of the man, and dart up the stream like an aquatic insect. In many respects I was like Wordsworth's "Idiot Boy," particularly when I was in my little boat, and God looked down and saw that I came to no harm.

I was between seven and eight when I took those river excursions, and I again see the red cows in the fields gazing at me, the angler by the side of a willow staring at one so young alone in a boat, and I see the water-rat leap out of the wet growth, and sometimes there is a sparkle and eddy of fish.

It was about this time, I think, that I was visited by an extraordinary passion of religion. I cannot imagine how it came about, unless indeed there was a little madness at the root of it ; but I remember taking down from my mother's book-shelf in her bedroom a book called "Line upon Line." She had, I have said, taught me to read, and I was quick in understanding what I read. I began to read this book, and quite suddenly a passion of religion possessed me. I went to my bedroom with the little volume in my hand, and knelt down and prayed with incredible fervor to be made and to be kept a good boy, and I also prayed to be saved. I arose and read again, and after a little once more fell upon my knees and prayed with the same incredible fervor for the same thing. Had I been caught *then*, as Johnson would say, they could have done anything with me in the religious line they liked. The oddest part was that I always locked myself up when these devotional fits seized me, and I never said a word about my praying and my feelings to my father or mother or human creature.

This singular condition of soul, extraordinary I think in one so young, wore off in about a fortnight. Also at this time, but when the religious affection had left me, I

began to think of the sea, to go down upon the pier and watch the race of the surge. I fell in love with the sea, and my childish eyes found every mood of it lofty and beautiful, like the sound of an organ in a cathedral. I dreamt of distant lands, and for every ship far out on the green rolling waters—dingy with the canvas of the collier, or ice-like with the pinions of the ocean passenger ship—I invented a story.

I was sitting at the head of the pier one day all alone, watching a deep black brig that was rolling in for Bauville, when a priest who had been observing me, approached. He was the handsomest priest I had ever seen. He looked an Italian. His underlip pouted a little, which mingled a certain sweetness of expression with the rest of his appearance.

"You must be an English boy," said he, "to look at the sea as you do."

Now this was a matter which had not been made clear to me, and speaking in French (I spoke that tongue better than English) I asked him why, at the same time lifting my cap; for I had been carefully instructed to salute the priests in the streets as a mark of respect for the religion of the country. Politeness in one so young pleased this handsome priest, and he said, smiling:

"All English boys love the sea. She is their mother. They go to her with delight and pride. The French do not love the sea. We are a sea-sick people," says he laughing; "our nation is a nation of soldiers."

"Have we no soldiers?" I asked.

"You have the finest troops in the world, but they are too few for your wants," he answered.

It was strange to think of this good priest talking so soberly to a little boy about seven or eight years old. I looked away to sea, and knew he watched me. The tide was running strong; all about the timbers of the pier-head the seas were sweating and scaling and hissing;

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swathes of mingled lights drove with the full stream of tide over the broken waters and resembled vast bodies of mackerel in their sparkle and density. The brig was rolling in, slowly crushing the yeast to the height of her quaint figurehead as she came ; there was the white lighting of the flight of gulls about her I remember, and I thought that no toy-maker ever sold a smaller sailor than the little figure that was then running up the brig's rigging.

"Your heart is with the sea," said the priest. "You will be a sailor."

"Shall I ?" I answered, and I imagined myself dressed in the uniform of a midshipman.

Strangely enough, a British merchant midshipman, when he was ashore, lived with his mother at Bouville, and I had often watched him, and particularly noticed his rolling walk, and I began to grow sensible of a sort of dumb yearning, so to put what is indefinable.

"Were you ever on board a ship ?" asked the priest.

"No," I answered.

"Come with me, my son, and I will take you on board yonder brigantine. She is commanded by a friend."

He pointed into the middle distance of the quay, right away beyond the pier, and we started. I was greatly excited. My small feet trod the air. This indeed was seeing life. Often had I looked wistfully down upon the deck of some dirty little coalman, and wondered what sort of a place the men fell into when they dropped out of sight through holes in the deck. But nobody had ever invited me to step on board, and I was a small boy staring down with eyes full of singular inventions, or following the lines or flights of the rigging aloft with far more interest than had the whole coal-dusted fabric been Punch's play or some fantastic humor of the Carnival.

The priest inquired my name, and asked a few other harmless questions. It was in the morning, and some

English people were on the pier. We were much observed by them for I was of course very well known as the son of Mr. and Mrs. Longmore. Did they think that the priest was walking me off to convert me? A retired colonel came to a stand and watched us as if he was uncertain, and as an Englishman did not clearly perceive what England would expect his duty to be. I turned my head, and still possess the image in my mind's eye of a square obstinate figure with large whiskers sheltered by a wide felt hat.

We arrived abreast of the brigantine, a small French vessel, and the priest looked down at her. A man was cutting up some cabbages in a pail of water near the little galley. He wore a blue smock and a tassel danced at the end of his cap. The priest called to him, "Is your captain on board?" The man with a respectful salute answered, "Yes," and at the same moment a little Frenchman rose through the companion hatch. He instantly saw the priest and bowed.

"May I descend with my young friend?"

"Why, certainly," was the answer.

The priest put his leg over and told me to follow. The ladder was up and down, the steps being affixed to the pier wall, and I daresay the priest went first to save me from falling if I should let go.

We gained the deck in safety, and now I was on board a ship, and could have fancied myself a thousand miles away.

"Does this young gentleman desire to go to sea with me?" said the little Frenchman, widening his blue breeches by diving his hands into his pockets.

"He will go to sea," answered the Father, "but not under your flag. He is English, and has the interpreting eyes of his country, and can behold in the ocean what is concealed from the gaze of French boys."

This as coming from a French priest astonished the little Frenchman, who regarded me with attention.

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"What is concealed from the gaze of French boys?" he inquired.

"Those vast lands, those continents of gold which this boy's countrymen colonize and take possession of, until," said the priest, resting his hand lightly on my shoulder, "a day may come when all the lands of the earth shall be theirs, no other language but theirs shall be spoken and our own nationality shall be merged into theirs and extinguished."

This produced a wry face in the little man, who shrugged his shoulders and asked us to enter the cabin. I moved in a dream. Everything was strange and delightful. We entered a cabin that was gloomy in consequence of the vessel lying against the side of the wharf. But the wonders were improved, nay heightened, into a sort of fairy mystery by the dim light. Had the place been full of sunshine, imagination would have slept, and the things I saw would have been the things they were. The shadowy bulkhead, the lockers like a coffin, a glimmering picture of the Virgin hanging upon the forward partition, the streak of brass swing-tray over the table, an open door with a glimpse of crockery on shelves; at these things and other features of that vanished interior, I stared with the marveling eyes of boyhood. Now and again when the vessel stirred a creak ran through her. These noises, combined with the smells which partook rather of the character of onion than bilge-water, greatly excited me. I felt that I should like to be at sea in this ship, and alone in her, steering for one of the islands which I used to think I saw painted upon the breasts of the clouds.

The captain put a bottle of red wine, some glasses and fruit upon the table.

"This is going to sea," said the priest, as he gave me a pear.

"Do not believe that the English love the sea," said the captain, filling a glass of wine for the priest and half a

glass for me, which I refused. "They are tradesmen, and if they go to sea it is not for love of it, but to stock their shops, and to find other countries to live in, for Great Britain is too small for her population, and millions are living the lives of slaves, and the Specter of Famine pays them their wages. I have traded to that country and know it. It is humbug. The Englishman does not love the sea, but he cannot get out of his country without going upon it. The Englishman is a tradesman. His spirit of adventure is without chivalry or romance. It is the Spaniards, and the French, and the Portuguese who are the true interpreters of the wonders and the miracles of the ocean. Read their voyages."

"Have you nothing to answer to that?" exclaimed the priest smiling as he looked at me.

"Do the sailors sleep down here?" I inquired.

"No. In open boxes forward," answered the captain.

"You shall view them, my child."

He took us into his sleeping berth and put a quadrant into my hand, and the Father examined it with as much curiosity as I did.

"Think," cried the priest, "that with this instrument you shall be able to make your way over the trackless ocean."

"More is wanted," said the captain, "but it is enough for the boy." And then to the great amusement of the priest, who laughed long and cordially, the captain blurted out, "Poot eet to your ee." He showed me how to hold the quadrant whilst the priest laughed, and then he said, "There! it is noon: it is eight bells. Hurrah for the sun! This boy has shot the sun, and it is noon by this boy."

After this we went on deck, and the priest and the captain fell into an argument at the little old compass-stand. The Father contended that the Chinese invented the compass: the captain on the other hand called the Chinese liars, villains and thieves.

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"They steal everything, and the rogues will show you books three thousand years old to prove the use in China of an invention whose existence scarcely dates back eight centuries."

At this the priest shrugged his shoulders, and asked me if I knew who invented the locomotive engine. I replied I did not.

"What!" he exclaimed, "an English boy and not know that."

"Softly," says the captain. "It has amused me in my time to read about locomotive engines, and I defy any one to tell you the name of its inventor. For example: an old man sits over a fire and the kettle begins to boil, and the lid to gargle, and the old man says, after long musing, 'There is a wonderful possibility of power in that kettle.' True; but that kettle will not run you to Paris in a few hours. The real inventor is the man who applies and makes a thing practicable and useful."

He was excited, and spoke these words with a large flourish of his hands, which drew a note of laughter from an Englishman who stood on the quay-side gazing down upon us. There are many varieties of cads; but there is no cad anyway comparable to the English cad who haunts such places as Bouville. He fled from his native country in debt, and how he lives, unless on billiards, no one could imagine. He wore a pot hat, tight horsey trousers, a turfy-cut coat, a large breastpin, and dog collars, and such a figure as this stood up there; his clean-shaven, full-blown face was colored with drink, and the dog laughed at us! But I was too young to be ashamed of my countrymen, and smiled back at him when I looked up and heard him laugh again.

"This," said the captain, "is the caboose."

I entered the little sentry box and desired to be a cook forthwith and sail away that day. The man who had been cleaning cabbages was causing a savory odor to fill the

air, which seemed to have put a thought into the captain's head.

"Dinner will be ready in half-an-hour. Stop with the English lad and dine with me."

The priest declined ; in less than half-an-hour he must be going. I was secretly much disappointed, for I greatly desired to eat like a sailor in a ship's cabin. The captain did not repeat his invitation to me, and in any case I doubt if the priest would have left me on board. We entered the forecastle, a little cave in the fore part of the ship, and I saw the boxes or bunks in which the sailors slept. A great Frenchman seated upon a chest was stitching a patch into an immense pair of trousers. He was almost concealed in shawls about the throat and chin, and we found that a cold had silenced his voice. The priest addressed some kindly words to him. He was the only occupant of that dingy little place, and to my eyes transformed it into a creation of romance, by sheer virtue of what he was about. And now I wanted to be a sailor, mending my trousers in a forecastle, sitting all alone.

We returned to the deck, and I stood for some moments staring up at the foremast which towered above me, one square yard ruling another and the rigging seemed as complicated as a spider's web. The priest seemed to understand what was passing in my little head.

"It would be too dangerous for you to go up there," said he.

"But why?" exclaimed the captain. "Boys are like monkeys—they cannot fall. Boys were born to climb. Come with me," says he, addressing me, "and I will show you more of the world than you have yet seen."

"Be very careful," cried the priest. "I consider myself responsible—he is very young."

"He is to be a sailor," answered the captain, and so saying he lifted me on to the bulwarks and put me into the foreshrouds, the priest meanwhile looking on with his

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arms a little extended and his hands hung as though he would wring them in a moment. A few idlers, a soldier or two, and three or four picturesque fish-wives in scarlet or striped petticoats, and naked legs and feet, and beautiful long bright earrings, watched us from the side of the quay. The captain got into the rigging alongside of me, and observing that my stride barely enabled me to measure the distance between the ratlines, he gripped me by the back of my blouse, and encouraging me at every step with such cries as, "How proud would Admiral Nelson be to see you! You are too fine a seaman for the British Navy; we will make you captain of our greatest man-of-war!" we slowly, very slowly, crawled aloft. We got as high as the futtock rigging. The priest shrieked "No higher!" A fish-wife exclaimed: "He climbs bravely. Let him go to the very top."

I had, however, no intention of proceeding. I was not giddy, but I seemed to gaze about me from an immense height. The vessel's deck looked like a plank, and the streaming waters of the ocean had opened into boundlessness. Suddenly I heard a familiar voice. "Hallo! Why, it's Walter! Come down, sah, how dare you—good God! he'll break his neck!"

I looked down and saw my father on the quay.

"Who's that?" said the captain. I told him. "Then we must descend," said he. "Softly! Courage!"

I found that it was much easier to climb than to descend. One or the other of my feet were forever missing the ratline and shooting through into air. When I was fairly on the bulwark rail my heart was beating very fast.

"What do you mean, sah, by behaving in this fashion?" cried my father. "Come on to the quay at once."

"It is his father," said the captain to the priest.

The priest bowed, and putting me on to the quay steps, helped me to the solid platform of the wharf.

"What do you mean by behaving like this, sah?" said my father.

"It is my fault," said the priest. "Your little son will be a sailor, but he is too young to ascend the rigging."

"Had his mother seen him she would have died in a fit," said my father. "Good-day."

The priest stooped and kissed my cheek. "He is a fine little boy, and I am sure you are proud of him," he said, then with a cordial flourish of his hand to me and the captain, who remained on the deck of his vessel, he strode off.

I never saw him again, though for long afterwards I was on the lookout for him. No doubt he determined my career, for from that day I resolved to be a sailor.

CHAPTER II.

THE PHANTOM OF THE POND.

ONE evening in the autumn, when I was not yet eight, I sat with my father and mother in the parlor of the cottage. The lamp was alight, and we listened to the mother reading aloud. It was a calm evening; a very small air whispered in the leaves of the trees; it was warm, and one of the two French windows, through which you stepped directly into the grounds, was wide open.

The moon was shining brightly, and filled the atmosphere with a silver, bluish light, in which the trees rose black as the plumes on a hearse, and every tree seemed to be meditating the meaning of its own shadow. I listened to my mother whilst I cast my eyes out of doors. I recall a little parlor strictly French in its fashion of furniture; a cosy room to sit in when the wind was fierce in tree and chimney, and when the sweep of the wet was like hail on the pane. My father had been toying for some minutes with a tobacco pouch; he now slapped his pockets, looked at the mantelpiece and round the room, and then told my mother to stop reading as he had mislaid his pipe.

Suddenly he cried out, "I know where it is; put on your cap and go and fetch it, Walter; you'll find it in its case on a shelf at the end of the conservatory. I exactly remember now where I laid it down."

"Couldn't you go?" said my mother.

"There is plenty of moonlight," answered my father; "the boy will whip there and back; I am not going into the dew in my slippers."

I put on my cap and passed through the window of the parlor into the grounds. I will not say I was afraid, but it was an errand I had rather my father should have undertaken than I. Some of us are imaginative and a little fearful at night when we are about seven and three-quarters. I did not like the moonshine; it made the bushes stand up like human figures; the light breeze in the trees swept shadowy figures over the grass and the walks and the beds. The conservatory stood at the bottom of the grounds, and was a walk of a few minutes.

I was about to run when a black cat, or it might have been a rabbit, darted athwart in front of me. I stopped dead. A bush on the left looked exceedingly like a man stooping in the act of taking aim. The noise of wheels in the road gave me heart, and I pushed on, broke into a trot, then ran swiftly as for life.

The conservatory was uncommonly dismal in the moonbeams; the glass was dirty and the light feeble, and the smell of the bulbs and flowers was earthy and vault-like. I thought I saw a man, struck motionless by my apparition whilst in the act of climbing a row of ascending ledges, many of which were vacant of flower-pots. I stared with a frantic heart, and scarcely prevented myself from shooting out and flying on the wings of fear to the house; but the thing kept very quiet, and I distinguished after a little that it was a coat spread with the sleeves extended. The gardener's coat, no doubt, but it was a very great shock.

I easily saw the pipe-case, took it in my hand, and went up the tiled walk conducting to the cottage. This, of course, carried me past that wonderful old pond I have described. Its slimy water shone in the moonlight, and lay stretched in a sheet of pearl. The luminary sparkled very clear in this part, and I was passing on, noticing even with my childish gaze the vivid accentuation the pearly water took from the black, rich, neglected growth around

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about the pond, when I halted as though lightning-struck. What did I see? That which you will not believe I saw, for who credits the relation of the visionary? But I was too young to be a ghost-seer; my brain was too fresh and clear, the blood in my veins flowed with the sweetness of youth; there was nothing morbid, acting unconsciously to myself, to coin for the vision in my head such a sight as had suddenly arrested my young legs as in a halt of death.

It was the form of a young woman standing on the pedestal in the middle of the pond. The black growth beyond showed through her; she seemed to be formed of vapor which, lighted by the moon, sparkled like salt. I saw her face distinctly; it was turned towards me, and I can say (for I ought to know) that it was a face of sweet and touching beauty, without sorrow, without mirth, a middle expression as it were, as the face wears in thought when the heart is at rest. Her arms and bosom were naked, but from her hips the sheen of silvery texture of which she was formed flowed like a robe to the pedestal. And in my breathless halt during a light passage of the evening breeze—it was about eight o'clock—I saw the folds of her ethereal garment wave.

I do not know what my sensations were: it is impossible for me to recall or analyze them; I was too young. But I can certainly recollect standing and gazing with a feeling of awe, mingled with curiosity and inevitable terror. The hands of the figure were clasped before it, and its hair floated in the moonlight in a translucent mist; then imagining I heard a footstep in the direction of the conservatory, I ran with the speed of a hare to the house.

Boys need to run far to become breathless. I was breathless, but not through running. My mother instantly noticed the expression on my face, perhaps in my enlarged eyes.

“What is the matter, Walter?” she asked.

I went round to the table and gave the pipe to my father and said :

“ There is a woman in the pond.”

“ What’s that ? ” exclaimed my father.

“ A woman ! ” ejaculated my mother.

I began to tremble, and without crying, but in a crying voice exclaimed : “ There’s a white woman standing up in the middle of the pond.”

“ What has the child seen ? ” exclaimed my mother, looking frightened and directing her eyes through the open window.

“ Come here, my boy,” said my father.

He felt my pulse and told me to put out my tongue.

“ He eats too many of that old woman’s sweets,” said he.

“ Do you feel hot ? ” asked my mother.

“ Yes,” I answered.

“ His stomach is upset,” said my father. “ Give him a powder and let him go to bed.”

I thought it hard that I should be obliged to take a powder because I had been compelled to see what I had not asked to see, and could have prayed not to see.

“ I am not hot,” I said ; “ there is a woman in the pond ; she is white, and stands in the middle.”

“ Nonsense ! ” exclaimed my father.

But my mother looked at me anxiously, and seemed a little scared.

“ I have never known the boy to see ghosts before,” said she ; “ why don’t you go and see what it is.”

My father left the room for his boots. He went into the grounds, and my mother went after him with a shawl over her head, and I followed her, hoping that the figure was gone, as it would frighten me horribly to see it again. We reached the pond, and my father said :

“ Where is this white woman of yours ? ”

The moon shone brilliantly upon the pedestal and all was bright clear air there. The figure had vanished.

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"I tell you it was there," I said stubbornly.

"He eats too many of those sweets, and you must give him a powder. Nothing like a little gray powder to dispel ghosts," said my father.

Nevertheless he went to the gate in the railing, which the gardener had kept clear of the growth, and peered into the moonbright water and slowly cast his eyes around as if trying to perceive a cause for my hallucination. Though I was relieved by the disappearance of the phantasm, I did not like to be doubted either, and I said to my mother :

"It stood there looking at me. It was all in white like a cloud. It had a face and arms, and I could see through it."

My mother made no answer. She *believed* me, and it made her uneasy to think that I should have seen a ghost.

"Well, there's nothing here," said my father coming slowly from the gate. "It is the effects of those heavy blocks of molasses and butter. If the old woman sells him more than two sous' worth a week I'll charge her with the doctor's bill."

"Had it eyes?" said my mother as we slowly returned to the cottage.

"Yes, and a nose and mouth," I answered. "It was a woman made of foam or cloud, and she looked at me whilst I stopped."

"Give him a powder," said my father, "and have done with it."

"I saw it, and I don't want a powder," I said, "and I won't take a powder," and I stamped my foot, for we were now in the parlor, and burst into tears. Certainly the idea of a powder administered in jelly, as it usually was, promised a worse terror than even the sight of a ghost.

"I don't think he wants medicine," said my mother. "The boy has seen something, and we shall never know what it is. It might have been some passing wreath of mist, or it might have been ——" She stopped.

"It might have been what? Do you want him to believe he saw a ghost? Do you want the child to believe there are such things?" exclaimed my father, filling his pipe. "It's time for you to go to bed, Walter."

"Come with me, dear," said my mother, and we went upstairs.

"Now don't go and make out that he has seen anything else but bad treacle and cheap butter," cried my father after us.

My mother sat with me for some time after I was in bed, and rang the bell for a glass of sweetened warm wine and water, which comforted me. She easily saw that I was not ill, and stood in no need of physic, and this, I fancy, made her the more concerned that I should have seen the phantom. She asked me if it was like anybody I knew, and I answered no. Then she assured me it was imagination and never could have existed. She told me that phantoms are the creations of fear, or of a diseased mind, or they may sometimes be a deception of the eye, but in any case there was no such thing as a spirit. Millions had filled the departed generations, and no man was to be found, unless he was mad, or drunk, or drugged, who had seen a ghost.

Nevertheless, after she was gone, I lay awake some time thinking much of the apparition. I was a little boy, 'tis true, but my sight was as good as my father's or mother's, and I had beheld the thing, and could describe it, which certainly would have been impossible to such an invention as I had, and there was no wreath of mist in all the land that was going to repose in a shape of beauty upon that pedestal, and look at me with neither sorrow nor cheerfulness.

However the morning sunshine despatched the ghost out of my head, and neither my father nor mother referred to it.

I was still at home, learning no lessons, doing nothing, an idle boy, with much—too much—time on my little hands. I went into the garden after breakfast and

began to search in the ditch between the next field and our grounds for anything I could find. I started a frog or two, and a young mouse. It was a bright, cool, windy day, and the land was piebald with the shadows of moving cloud. What do boys hunt for when they get into ditches, and grub in and among hedges? What do they expect to find? Perhaps my pleasure lay in the *hope* of finding something. After toiling for some time in this aimless quest, creeping, pausing, peering, starting, I grew sick of it, and came out of the tangled ditch, and joined the gardener, who was at work at the top of the grounds.

It seems he had got to hear that I had seen a ghost. My mother may have told one of the maids, who had reported the circumstances to him. He was a dull, honest fellow of a very sallow complexion, long ears, hunched shoulders, and he had the superstitions of his race and his faith. On my approaching him he at once said in the *patois* of Bouville, which I will render in plain English:

“Why did not you make the sign of the cross?” and he leaned upon his spade and regarded me. “You could have made it either in the air or upon your breast.”

“What for?” I asked.

“Ghosts cannot endure the sign of the cross,” said he; “they recoil and moan, and disappear. What should we do if we could not cross ourselves?”

“Mamma says there was no ghost, and she is older than you, and ought to know,” said I, not relishing that this thing should be forced on me again.

He sank his head in a shrug and made an alarming face.

“Madam, your mother,” said he, “may never have seen a ghost, but I have; and those who have do not like to be told there are no such things, because it is like disputing the judgment of God.”

“What sort of a ghost was yours?” I asked him, picking up a stone and throwing it at a bird.

“It was a priest. The figure stood by my bedside at one

o'clock in the morning, and I said, 'Father Joseph, you frighten me, what is it you want? He wrung his hands. Do you see that stone there? His face was the color of that stone. He tottered, and believing he would fall, I put out my hand to support him, and it passed through air. The figure disappeared in the wink of an eye, and next day I heard that Father Joseph had died at one o'clock in the morning.

He was much agitated by this memory, and visibly shook in his boots. His talk, however, was above my years, and it did not take a hold of my mind. Well for me that this was so, for it was in the power of that sallow gardener to have made me ill with waking nights for weeks.

I now thought that I would swim my boat in the pond, and went to the house to fetch it. A tall hedge divided the two gardens, and the pond lay on the other side of the hedge. I took my boat which had been my mother's gift on my last birthday and made for the pond, with never a thought of the phantom in my head, and the gardener's loose talk clean gone out of memory. The gate stood open as it usually did. It was swung and closed by two stanchions which were supported by bars of iron cemented into the brickwork. The gate opposite was also open. In the course of the day the gardener was constantly taking water from this pond. For some reason I am unable to explain, he had placed a bucket upon the pedestal; he contrived this by means of a hooked pole.

I knelt close to the edge of the pond and put my boat upon the water, but whilst I watched it gliding through a clear opening amid the slimy and weedy surface, I overbalanced myself and went head over heels. Though these be puerilities they are deep truths to me, and what now happened is the most wonderful circumstance of my life. The pond was deep enough to drown three boys of my height standing one on another's head. I slanted in without a splash as I suspect, and when I was under water I

thought to myself, "This is a dream!" Even whilst I thought and very swiftly, for I must have risen soon from that first dive, I distinctly saw in the water, whether with my eyes closed or open I don't know, the phantom of the preceding night. It was a shape of mist, its face was close to mine, and I very well remember the expression, the look that was not sorrowful or smiling, and the cloud of hair streaming off in the green obscure. It vanished in a breath, and I rose with a bubbling yell close against the pedestal, so close that I was able to seize the bucket, which I turned over my head and then floated a few feet away *in* it.

There was no air in this bucket, and I let go, and down I sank. I have the completest recollection of my sensations; there was no fear, nothing but a feeling of dreaminess, as if I had fallen asleep and should wake in a minute and find myself at the brink of the pond with the boat in my hand. I rose again and splashed, and cried out as loudly as I could, for my throat was full of filthy water and weeds.

Who had told me, where had I read, that if you go down the third time you do not rise again? This idea was present to me when I sank, kicking out and struggling, but the belief proved false in my case, for I rose for the third time close against the stanchion-irons. I grasped them, got my knee on to the edge of the brickwork, and rolled upon the grass, where I lay motionless as though I'd been drowned indeed, full of water, weeds and tittlebats.

As I was afterwards told, whilst I lay thus the gardener came along. He had heard nothing. He crunched leisurely along the gravel walk, but on casting his eye at the pond he instantly saw by the clearness of its surface that it had been swept and in some way perturbed. He approached the opposite gate to look, and immediately catching sight of my floating cap and the boat, he shouted—"My God! He lies drowned at the bottom!" He shook off his boots and pulled off his coat and plunged in manfully—a filthy header! black-clear as the water showed where

I had kicked and struggled. He swam well, and made nothing of that pond, having the pedestal as a rest and the brick-wall within a kick or two of his feet. He sank and felt, and came up and blew, and emerging at last half drowned against the gate close beside which I lay, he saw me. "Ah God!" cried he, and scrambled out.

I lay on my face and presented every appearance of death. My face and hair were covered with duckweed, and my mouth was full of the stuff. Certainly in no fouler pool could a boy be drowned. After looking at me the gardener picked me up, and ran with me to the house.

My mother was in the parlor, in the act of entering, in fact, when the gardener arrived at the open window, clasping my drenched figure to his equally drenched form. She shrieked on seeing me, and cried: "Is he drowned? Bring him in. Lay him on the sofa! O Merciful! My poor, poor darling!" The drenched gardener talked as he laid me on the sofa.

"I do not think he is drowned, madam. He got out by himself. I found him lying on the grass after seeking for him in the pond. He should be stripped, dried, and put to bed. No doctor could do more," said this gardener, who, if a fool in the presence of a ghost, grew wise in the face of calamity.

My mother rushed to the bell. The servants arrived, and set up a howl on seeing me drowned as they thought. I was borne away to the kitchen, and whilst they stripped me before the fire, showed signs of life. They rubbed me into a glow, and the streaming gardener recommended a teaspoonful of *eau de vie*. More perhaps was administered, with good effect, for I was conscious before I was put to bed.

This was a narrow escape from drowning, and from perishing after being delivered. My father was out, and when I awoke from a refreshing sleep I felt as well as I was before I made the plunge. My parents stood together looking down upon me. I opened my eyes and smiled. My father

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kissed me, and my mother also kissed me passionately, and sank upon her knees by my bedside, and thanked God aloud in a clear, adoring mother's voice for His merciful preservation of me, whilst my father stood looking on deeply moved. My mother then asked me how I felt. I told her I wanted to get up. She would not hear of this, and promised to sit and read to me.

"I'll have that pond filled up," said my father. "I should have foreseen this. It is deep enough to drown a taller man than I."

"I saw the white woman again," said I.

My mother started, glanced at my father, then looked at me.

"The white woman of last night?" she asked in a tone that nearly expressed terror.

"Yes," said I. "She was in the water, and when I sank she came close to me, and I saw her face just the same as last night."

"Just the same?" said my mother, scarcely concealing her superstitious alarm.

"Yes; she was all white," I answered.

"What he saw," said my father, "was the impression left upon his brain by the figure he imagines he has seen." He then said to me: "Did you see that white woman in the water before you fell in?"

"No," I answered.

"Did nothing invite you to plunge in?"

"I fell in," said I.

"That's about the amount of it," said my father; "and the white woman's a white lie. But that pond must be filled up, ghost or no ghost. Indeed of late I have often fancied it smelt disagreeably."

After some further words he left my mother to talk and read to me.

I was kept in bed that day and was quite well next morning. Nothing was ever said to me about the ghost.

I had repeated the gardener's story to my mother, who, doubtless, ordered him to hold his tongue in future, but I have since thought that the thing weighed in trouble upon her, for I recollect that she would often look very pensively at me in a manner which, young as I was, I considered unusual.

My nearly being drowned by no means cooled my passion to go to sea. All that I could get my father to say on the subject was, "He would consider it. I must first go to school. I was much too young for the sea; and then, again," said he, "is it to be the Navy or the Merchant Service? for I do not think I can afford to send you into the Navy, and the Merchant Service is not a calling for a son of a gentleman to follow." My mother, on the other hand, would not hear of my going to sea at all. She had the Englishwoman's natural dread of salt water. It made you sick; it drowned you. It was a life fit only for coarse, rough, friendless men, who did not take cold if they slept in wet clothes, and who digested food which killed crocodiles. These were not points I could reason upon, but I was not to be swerved. I continued to haunt the harbor as before, and to stand for an hour at a time gazing down with wonder and the gravest romantic imaginings at some dirty little coal ship fresh from Shields, or some sorry little brigantine—one of the many sea-mongrels which entered that port—loading commodities for the Mediterranean.

One day, about a fortnight after my dangerous bath, my father at dinner said to my mother, "I have a great mind to go in for photography. It will kill the time. It is a beautiful art."

"But you know nothing about it," answered my mother.

"Perhaps more than you are aware of," said he.

"I believe very dangerous poisons are used," she exclaimed.

"I am not afraid of poisons," said my father.

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"No, but I am," exclaimed my mother; "supposing a bottle of something likely to produce instantaneous death, or, which is worse, death in slow agonies, should find its way into the kitchen and be used by mistake for flavoring a sauce."

My father, however, was resolved to kill the time by indulging in an art which he considered beautiful and superior, as I have heard him say, to painting. I believe the idea had been put into his head through his talking to one Delplanque, a little animated dealer in cameras and photographic materials. Be this as it will, after dinner my father told me to get my cap, and we walked to Delplanque's shop. They spent about an hour in talking about photography, smelling chemicals, examining examples of the art. Delplanque showed my father how to work a camera. I was placed upon a stool and focussed by my father with grave satisfaction.

"It is a wonderful discovery," said Delplanque.

"What is the price of this camera?"

"It is second-hand; you shall have it for two hundred and fifty francs."

"It will do for me to begin with."

"Excellently," said Delplanque. "What more would you want? In it you can take the queen of your country or the beggar boy in the street."

"I shall require a studio," said my father.

"You need nothing more than two glass frames in your roof and a little dark room for developing your plates."

"I will see a carpenter on the subject," said my father.

"May I take it for granted, Mr. Delplanque, that as I shall buy all my materials here, you will come to my home and give me a few lessons gratis?"

Delplanque assured him that he would make him an expert photographer in three lessons, and he would not charge him a sou.

Just outside this shop, when leaving, we met with the

strangest figure in Bouville. He was a Count, and I will call him the Count Pomade. He was dressed, to begin with, in a little shining hat, cocked, and curled at the brim as though it had been broiled. He wore a red stock and large turn-down collars, and was buttoned up in a frock-coat whose skirts were little longer than a jacket. His trousers were the admiration and the talk of the British residents, who believed that he made them with his own hands out of worn-out mattress covers. Certainly the material in which he invariably clothed his legs bore a curious resemblance to what is known to upholsterers as "bed-ticking." He cleaned his own boots, and they shone with noontide effulgence, and they made his life a burden; for his walk consisted of hops and skips to escape the smallest resemblance to anything like mud. He lived to keep his boots bright, and boasted that at the end of even a wet day he would return to his lodgings without a speck upon them. He was about sixty years of age, and his face had the dried-out look of an old ape. He occupied one room, and slept in a turn-up bedstead, was a great lover of music, played the fiddle very well, but his compositions were insufferably bad. He was a harmless little man, and very poor. It was believed that he was engaged to be married: he was certainly often seen in the company of a fine, middle-aged English lady, named Mrs. Boyd. His withered face would put on an expression of mystery when this matter was referred to, and once when my father asked him if the news was true that he was married, he answered, to the astonishment of my mother, "Yes."

My father said: "Where were you married?" and the little Count pointing, in his short frock-coat and bed-ticking trousers, with ludicrous attempts at solemnity, at the ceiling, answered:

"In ze 'eavens."

He stood looking in at the window as we passed out of the shop.

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"Ah, Mr. Longmore, how do you do?" he cried, approaching with an indescribable skip and his arm extended. "I was going to bring my fiddle to your house this afternoon. I have composed a *Dance de Prêtes*. Between you and me, I don't think there is anything more melodious in Bellini."

"I should have been glad to see you, Count," answered my father, who had no taste whatever for music, whilst my mother's defect in this way was so great that, though she could join in a hymn in church, she could not have distinguished between two hymns out of it. "But I am going to amuse myself with photography, and shall be engaged this afternoon with a carpenter."

"You are going to begin business as a photographer?" cried the Count, gazing aghast, for he came of an ancient family, and would not have been seen in the company of a tradesman, even if he had borrowed money from him.

"I am going to amuse myself," said my father; "time hangs heavily upon me in this little town."

"Charming! delightful!" cried the Count. "I tell you what," he whipped his finger to the side of his nose; "I will sit to you."

"So you shall," answered my father, glancing at me, who was laughing at the little man's grimaces.

"More," cried the Count with excitement, "I will bring up Mrs. Boyd."

"So you shall, so you shall," replied my father, looking over the Count's hat down the street.

"We will sit together," exclaimed the enthusiastic Count. "When will you be ready?"

"I'll let you know," answered my father, who said: "Come along, Walter, we must be off. Good-by, Count!" and with an air of bustle, and looking at his watch as though he had to keep an appointment, he got away from the little man. This was very well managed,

for the Count would certainly have hopped and skipped with us to our door and waited to be asked in ; and my father was always afraid of being alone with him for fear of his borrowing money.

CHAPTER III

COUNT POMADE.

My father on our way home called upon a carpenter and told the man to come up to the house next afternoon. His head was full of photography, and he could think and talk of nothing else. On our arrival we heard voices in the drawing-room—a pleasant little apartment filled with the smell of flowers all the year round. When my father went in I lingered on the staircase, boy-like, to hear what passed. My mother introduced him to somebody, and a lady's voice, rather high, but not wanting in sweetness, said: "It is strange to know people intimately by sight and yet not speak to them."

"Mrs. Stuart talks of returning to Australia," my mother said.

After this I went upstairs. I had heard them speak at table of a Mrs. Stuart, and knew that a Major Willoughby had asked my mother to call upon the lady, who was a widow of an old brother officer of his, and she had done so, and this was the return visit. I had heard them also say at table that Mrs. Stuart was an Australian, and had met her husband at Sydney, where he was a captain or lieutenant. My remembering this proves that small boys listen with attention, and are to be regarded as sources of danger. And the small boy is dangerous in proportion to his loneliness; when he is much in the company of his mother and father, instead of playing about with children of his own age, he grows precocious, and at eight holds opinions of his own, reasons upon them, and argues them

with you. There is a bad flavor about this sort of talent in the forced, home, hot-bed boy. He will command the servants with his father's air, and the company cannot be comfortable if he is present, and it knows that he is in possession of a secret.

When I was in my bedroom my mother, at the foot of the stairs, called to me.

"Come, Walter," she said. "I want to introduce you to the prettiest little girl you ever saw. But first brush your hair, and be quick, for they will be going."

I went downstairs and entered the drawing-room shyly, for if I was precocious by stress of association with my elders, I trust and believe that I was neither forward nor impudent.

"Oh, this is your son, Mrs. Longmore?" said Mrs. Stuart, extending her hand to me.

She was a decidedly handsome woman between five-and-thirty and forty, quietly but well dressed. Her hair was fair and plentiful, and her figure as good as if she had been two-and-twenty. Beside her sat a young girl of my own age, and I was approaching Mrs. Stuart to shake hands when, on glancing at this child, I stopped dead, staring with fear and wonder, just as I had stopped dead when I saw the phantom of the pond. My agitation was so extreme that I trembled as to a sudden blast of cold wind.

Mrs. Stuart looked at me as if she believed I was deranged, and would in a minute fall down upon the floor in a fit of epilepsy.

"What is the matter with you, Walter?" cried my mother.

I backed away to her side and said, pointing to the child—"She is the girl I saw in the pond."

"What do you say?" exclaimed my mother, depressing my arm, for I continued to point.

"She is the girl I saw in the pond," said I, with a half blubbering note in my voice.

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"Who is? He cannot mean my Belle," cried Mrs. Stuart.

"There is an old woman," said my father, "who kneads black messes not far from here into what is called *tablettes*; this boy is allowed ten sous a week, and he spends every halfpenny in those square and weighty abominations of treacle and butter. His stomach is therefore constantly out, and the ghost that he saw means ten sous worth of sweetmeats."

"I haven't bought a sou's worth this week," said I, in a sulky, crying voice.

"But what did he see? What is it all about? What has my Belle got to do with the pond?" cried Mrs. Stuart in a manner that would have made me see, had I been older, that she was very superstitious.

"There is a pond in the lower garden," answered my mother, "and Walter some time ago thought he saw a figure standing on the pedestal where there is no shape or image for a fountain."

"Like my Belle?" half shrieked Mrs. Stuart to me.

"Yes," I answered. "She is the same, only littler."

"How *very* extraordinary!" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart in a sort of gasp, after a moment's pause. "Come and look at Belle close, and tell me if she is like what you saw."

"I can see her from here," said I, sticking to my mother.

"It is certainly strange," said my mother in a somewhat low, mysterious voice, "that Walter should not only have seen the ghost over-night on the pedestal, but that he should have tumbled in next day, and then seen it in the water where he was almost drowned."

Mrs. Stuart breathed deep and repeated, "How *very* extraordinary! Are you sure it wasn't the figure of a little boy you saw?"

"No," I answered, "it was a woman just the same as

that girl, only littler," and I pointed again, being greatly agitated, and again my mother put down my arm.

"I never heard anything so extraordinary," said Mrs. Stuart, turning to look at her child, who, with her feet off the floor, sat beside her mother staring at me fixedly with precisely the expression of the phantom. Indeed it was not to be gathered by her looks that she knew she was concerned in this talk.

"The thing is easily explained," said my father. "A boy suffering from bad digestion passes alone through a moonlighted garden ; he thinks he sees a ghost ; I wonder he didn't see twenty. The impression he receives is such that when next day he tumbles into the pond, his brain reproduces the image of the previous evening."

"Did you ever dream of Master Walter, Belle?" asked Mrs. Stuart.

"No," answered the little girl.

"Have you ever seen him before?"

"No," she replied.

"Have you ever met her before now?" she inquired, addressing me.

"Not before that night," I answered.

"I never heard anything so strange," said Mrs. Stuart. "How old is Master Walter?" and she looked at me with a singular expression, as though I had been a mummy or something strange and frightful, like an Asiatic god in a show.

"He will be eight in February," answered my mother.

"Six months older than Belle. Look again at my little daughter, Master Walter," said she, "and tell me if you see the same likeness you saw when you first came into the room."

"It's the same," I answered.

"Come close to her. You're not afraid of your phantom, I hope," said she, with an uneasy laugh and a glance at my mother.

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I stepped over to the little girl, who put out her hand, which I took. Young boys are not judges of female beauty and cannot admire it, but recalling that child's face I may say that it was as sweet as a flower. Her hair was a delicate amber which promised a rich auburn, her eyes were a deep and vivid violet, the lashes not too long, the eyebrows delicately defined in golden threads much darker than the hair. The extraordinary part was the expression on her face, as I stood with boyish uncouthness holding her hand. It was neither sad nor smiling; it was the look the vision wore.

"Perhaps she doesn't seem so like, now that you're close to," said Mrs. Stuart hopefully.

"Yes, she does," I answered. "She looks more like."

"Can I see the pond, Mr. Longmore?" said Mrs. Stuart, jumping up with some excitement.

We all sallied forth. I walked with the little girl. I should not have walked with her of my own free will, but she hung back, and as it were obliged me to walk with her.

"Did you really see me the other night?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, "of course I did."

"How was I dressed?"

"You had nothing on," I answered.

"Wasn't I cold?" she exclaimed.

"But it wasn't you—it was—it was—"

Here I began to stutter, and came to a stop. My father a little ahead walking with Mrs. Stuart and my mother opportunely helped me.

"It was his stomach, and nothing else," I heard him say.

"What do you play at?" said Belle.

"I swim boats, and I'm going to be a sailor," said I, as I desired to seem a man in the eyes of this young lady.

"Will you play at horses with me?" she asked, in a wooing, plaintive voice. "Oh, how I should love a run round these gardens."

"I haven't any reins," I said.

"Tape will do," she cried. "Oh, mother, we're going to play horses."

The three stopped to survey us.

"Be quick then, Belle," said Mrs. Stuart, "for after I have seen the pond, I am going home."

"Let them enjoy themselves," said my father.

"We want tape to make reins with," said Belle.

"You'll find more than you want in my work-basket, Walter," said my mother:

I was a little excited, and ran swiftly to the house, but Belle was at my heels running as fast as I. But I did not know this till I was in the dining-room with my hand upon the work-basket, and then the little girl stood close beside me. I took out a bundle of tape and a pair of scissors and ran with Belle to the pond at whose rail my father and the ladies were standing. It was no longer a pond. The gardener had been engaged for some days in filling it up with barrows of mold, upon the surface of which he proposed to spread a cart-load of gravel. But the pedestal showed its head, and the outline of the pond lay clearly defined by the railing and the tangled growths which were scented by the wild-flower.

My mother made me a pair of reins, and away we went. How happy was that child's laugh, how fairylike her movements as she bounded ahead of me, imitating with the grace of a well-proportioned little girl the actions of a restive horse. Her pale hair floated out from under her hat, and I thought of the cloud of hair that swam at the head of the figure in the water. Our racings carried us two or threetimes round the grounds, and then our breathlessness brought us to a halt at the top of the upper garden. There was a short stretch of grass here and we threw ourselves upon it.

"I like playing with you," she said. "When may I come and play with you again?"

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"I'll ask mother," I answered.

"Do you go to school?"

"Do you?"

"I am taught at home by governess. I am learning the piano. I was born in Australia. Do you know where Australia is?" she asked, fastening her violet eyes upon me with a very earnest gaze.

"It's in the world," I answered sheepishly. "I shall go to it when I'm a sailor."

Here I heard my father calling my name, so we interrupted the conversation by standing up and racing down to the pond.

"Mamma!" cried the girl, "when may I come again to play with this boy?"

"Let her come and drink tea with him to-morrow, Mrs. Stuart," said my father. "If you will send her here I promise to return her to you in safety at the hour you name."

Mrs. Stuart suggested another day. Whilst they talked Miss Belle and I stared at each other. I had two sous in my pocket, and wondered if the old woman had a *tablette* left, as I had a mind to rush down and purchase it for the young lady.

"I quite understand," said my mother, "the propriety of sending little boys to girls' schools. They come under refining influences. Here is Walter, talking to the gardener or going down to the harbor and getting into ships with priests and people, and fighting street boys. I hope you will send little Belle often to us; these grounds are now perfectly safe for them to romp in."

Mrs. Stuart thanked her with an expression of uncertainty in her face. They went away. My father accompanied them to the door and I walked by my mother's side. She was very thoughtful.

"I hope you have not been deceiving us, Walter," said she. "How is it possible that such a thing as you saw

should have a face ? By pretending it is like the little girl's, you are making me and her mamma very uncomfortable."

"She is the same that was in the pond," I answered stoutly.

She tried to shake my conviction, but I stuck to my guns.

My father rejoined us when we were in the house. He said he had been kept in talk by Mrs. Stuart in the road.

"She's upset by Walter's vision, I fancy ; asked when he was going to sea. 'Why,' said I, 'you heard how young he was.' 'But boys go to sea so very, very young,' said she. 'Not as babies,' I answered. Between ourselves, I don't think the good lady will trouble us any more. She told me plainly that she was a spiritualist, and believed in planchette and spirit-rapping, and other disgraceful inventions of wretches who prey upon weak minds. If you meet them in the street, Walter, pretend not to know them. Mrs. Stuart will thank you."

"But if Belle should run across to him ?" said my mother.

"Her ma won't let her," said my father, who then went up-stairs into the garret to consider within himself the fitting of it up as an art studio.

My phantom suited the times, for there never was a period in the century when superstitions of the most imbecile sort were more believed in, fostered, heightened by lectures, by *séances*, by the babble of the clairvoyant, by the table which went round and rose into the air, and by the piece of heart-shaped card-board on wheels which told yours and your companion's fortune if you laid your hands upon it. As I afterwards came to know, a little nest of English spiritualists flourished amongst the residents at Bouville. Mrs. Stuart was of them. My mother would have inclined that way, but my father's strong sense kept her moored. Yet it is certain that the apparition, if

apparition it were—for what could I know now, more than I knew then what it was?—affected her as it had affected Mrs. Stuart. That same night at supper, I remember, she got upon the subject, and said she felt convinced that there was something more than a coincidence in it.

“I can believe,” she reasoned, “that what the boy saw was a delusion of the eye, and that what he saw next day in the water was the memory of it. But how do you reconcile little Belle’s features with the features of the vision?”

“Another delusion,” said my father.

“It really would seem as if their lives were to be mingled in some way or other,” exclaimed my mother, looking at me earnestly.

Next afternoon the carpenter arrived, and with him a bricklayer, and they began to partly unroof the house. I was deeply interested in these proceedings, and spent hours in the garret watching the workmen, and when my father’s back was turned delayed them by ceaseless questions. I was so interested indeed that I forgot to observe that when the day on which Miss Belle was to drink tea with me arrived, she failed to keep the promise her mother had made for her. In truth, Mrs. Stuart did not even send a note of excuse, but if the thing was talked over by my father and mother, nothing was said about it in my presence.

I think it took about a fortnight to fit up that studio. And then there appeared a little garret with cucumber frames in the roof, and a small cupboard, in which my father was a tight fit, for developing plates. He had purchased several books on photography, had studied them with diligence, and talked as if with plenty of knowledge of the art. He took a few lessons from Mr. Delplanque, and, needless to say, I was the victim. I was put upon a chair and focussed. My father defied me to move whilst he squeezed into his cupboard for his bath and plates.

It was about the hardest time I ever had. He was heedlessly long in that developing room.

I would hear him clattering the plates about and stumbling among his bottles, and whenever he opened the door there would follow him an overwhelming smell of collodion. This smell floated down-stairs. It mingled with the cooking. I tasted my father's diversion in the sauces. It was in the bedroom and the hair-brushes, in my mother's cap and my father's hat, and wherever you went in that cottage the smell of collodion was there, as though the house was full of drunken French polishers who had upset the varnish.

"Have you moved?" he would say when he came out.

I had not moved, but he never believed me. He would focus me again, then step round and adjust an arm, so; clip up my chin, thus; screw my head a little round to the light, and tell me to smile, to fix my eyes on that peg, and on no account whatever to wink. He was so deucedly long in taking me, that some time before he put the cap on my smile had disappeared, and I was blinking hard, whilst he, to preserve the expression on my face, kindly looked away and counted at the opposite wall with moving lips.

The photographs, as may be supposed, were failures for a long time. When developed in the positive process, as it is called, little more would be visible than a smile, or an eye, or the parting of the hair. Sometimes you saw nothing but a sort of mirage or the likeness of a tumor or some inward swelling in the human body as portrayed by the X rays. He took me to Mr. Delplanque, and quarreled with that gentleman for selling him bad chemicals. Delplanque swore that all his stuff came from Paris, and was of the very best quality, and that it was impossible that Mr. Longmore could prepare his bath properly. Certainly that bath threatened to make my father's life a burden to him and others. It detained him in the garret, it withheld him from meals, it preoccupied him. A growing indifference

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to neatness of attire was also to be observed in him at this period; he wore, whilst in the studio, a short Holland jacket, the sleeves of which were burnt and stained with chemicals, as were his fingers and thumbs.

But the part that tried him most was the negative process, that is the printing off from the plates. His stock included a number of little frames for printing, and these he would place about in the sunshine on the floor, where they looked like rat-traps. This process was slow and melancholy. At first the paper when withdrawn from its frame seemed as if it had been plunged into ink, or else it was a rusty brown in which might appear a something answering to the human face. But this soon vanished, and left not even a nostril or an ear behind. He denied himself to everybody until he should be perfect. I recall but one exception. This was a priest, who had come to the house on some errand of charity. My father saw him standing in the doorway, and asked him to step up-stairs and sit for his likeness. The Father seemed a little alarmed. Certainly it was an extraordinary response to an appeal for charity. However, he followed my father up-stairs, and then was subjected to a discipline which many would have considered as severe as a series of penances. He was a picturesquely ugly priest, and my father thought much of his garb from an art point of view. He was asked to smile, afterwards to frown, then to look as if the sins of the world weighed upon his spirits, then to seem on the whole hopeful for humanity.

"They will make a fine set if they come out well," said my father to the tormented but good-natured priest.

The struggle lasted about two hours; then the priest rose; he said he really must go.

"Look in," said my father, "in the course of a few days; and I will show them to you." And he then gave him five francs for his charity.

All but one of these photographs proved failures. In

one nothing was visible but the priest's leg ; another, however, was fairly creditable, and my father was so proud of it that he mounted it on a card and showed it about. Yet it entirely faded out in a fortnight.

One day my father came down to dinner, holding a piece of white cloth, upon which was a smear of brilliant black.

"This," said he, "should be a fortune."

"What have you there?" said my mother, who was short-sighted. "Have you caught a beetle?"

"This," said my father, whilst I sat impatiently waiting for him to begin to carve, "is a most beautiful black hair-dye which I quite accidentally lighted upon by mixing—" and he named certain chemicals of which, of course, my mother knew as much about as I.

"I hope you don't mean to dye your hair, Walter," said my mother.

"No, I don't think it would suit me : mine is not a cast of face for dyed hair," he answered. "I shall ask a friend to allow me to experiment upon him. What a rich and thrilling black ! It should sell like wild-fire in France, where the people are lovers of glossy rich curls."

"Is it poisonous?" my mother inquired.

"It is idle to ask that question about hair-dyes," replied my father. "People do not drink them."

"It might penetrate the pores," suggested my mother. "If it got under the scalp it would mingle with the blood, and if it is virulent the person on whom you experiment is a dead man."

"Bosh !" said my father, chewing roast beef and admiring sideways the smear on the piece of cloth.

"You will make no experiments on Walter, at all events," said my mother cautiously.

Amongst some of the earliest sitters was the little Count Pomade. He always brought his fiddle with him and a piece of music of his own composition, which he persisted in sawing through, though my father would take no heed,

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but come and go in and out of the dark room as if Pomade had left the house. The Count struck all sorts of attitudes, and his excessive vanity rendered him a very good patient for the various operations to which he was subjected.

It happened one fine afternoon that my mother, father and I were walking on the pier when we perceived the Count and Mrs. Boyd approaching us at a distance. It was an autumn day though the sun still shone with all the ardor of August ; a very light wind moved, and the sea was a deep and thrilling blue, and ran in delicate lines of light. The water was graced by a number of vessels which had been detained by the calm or the inshore wind of the preceding day. The full-buttocked smacks rolled lightly upon their own black shadows, and the flash of the sail to the swing of the sheet struck the blood-red glance deeper yet. Two or three colliers in ballast were heading for some English port. I watched them with attention, and thought them beautiful ships. Should I think so now ? And yet was that child, as I then was, wrong in beholding romance, and glory and loveliness in dark-patched, ill-fitting canvas, and crazy hulls whose squeaks the rats re-echoed ? If a man must be a little child to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, he must carry the heart of a child if he would rightly love and delight in the splendors of this world and taste of its sweetnesses. The greatest poet since the death of Milton has taught us this, and there is, therefore, no need for me to enlarge upon it.

We met the Count and Mrs. Boyd. The Count raised his little frizzle-brimmed hat, and Mrs. Boyd gave us the charming bow of the English lady. If they had been married in the heavens no one doubted the purity of their matrimonial contract ; the angels might have witnessed the nuptials. This was so well understood at Bouville that Mrs. Boyd was everywhere received.

“ It is convenient,” said the Count, after some trifling talk, “ for Mrs. Boyd to come with me to-morrow and sit

for our likenesses. How do your engagements stand, Mr. Longmore ?”

“Quite at your service. Pray come. I shall hope to be able to do you justice, Mrs. Boyd,” said my father. “By the way, Count, I have invented something which is going to make my fortune.”

Here he looked very hard at the Count’s whiskers, which had not apparently been dyed for some days.

“What is it ?” jerked out the Count, to whom the word fortune was as the magnet to the needle.

“It is a hair-dye,” answered my father.

“There are fifty,” answered the Count with a shrug.

“But this is the most marvelous black you ever saw,” exclaimed my father. “Job after his sufferings would have looked youthful could he but have applied it once.”

“You should try it, Count,” said Mrs. Boyd.

“I have no objection,” answered the Count.

“Come to-morrow then, and bring Mrs. Boyd with you,” said my father in a note of pleasure. “Come early. Say at half-past eleven, when there is plenty of good light, and we shall be pleased if you will make our dinner your luncheon.”

This was agreed to, and when we had strolled a little upon the pier we returned to the cottage.

I was in the studio next day with father when he was preparing the hair-dye for the Count. He was in good spirits, and seemed to think the Count would prove a fine advertisement. The ingredients, I believe, were dangerous, nor was the smell of this hair-dye very agreeable. My father placed a tooth-brush and a saucer beside the bottle in readiness, and punctually at half-past eleven Count Pomade and Mrs. Boyd arrived.

We all went up-stairs into the studio. What followed was both diverting and irritating. The Count, who was consumed with vanity, insisted on posing himself and Mrs. Boyd ; he caused her to look at him, whilst with his hands

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clasped upon his waistcoat he gazed upwards, as if in a rapture. My father said he would appear in his picture as if he had got the gout in his stomach.

"The finest pictures in the world," exclaimed the Count, "represent saints and others with their eyes upturned."

"You are not a saint, and I wish you would place yourself as I want," said my father.

"It would be ridiculous to come out like a pair of tame monkeys staring into your camera," rejoins the Count.

"Pray let Mr. Longmore have his way, Count," said Mrs. Boyd, observing that my mother turned her head to conceal her laughter, "or I shall refuse to sit."

After much trouble, many protests on the part of the Count, invitations on my father's part to Pomade to smile, to Mrs. Boyd to look up a little, to Pomade again to turn his head to the light, a likeness was taken, but I believed it never would be taken, for my father was extremely irritating as a critic of postures. Just when you thought he was going to pull off the cap, he would say—"Turn your face a little more this way, Mrs. Boyd. Count, I should uncross my knee if I were you." Or—"That left boot will show in the picture as if you were a giant sitting a mile behind it."

They gave him three sittings, and now it was for the Count to try my father's hair-dye.

"Let me look at it," said Pomade, a little suspiciously.

My father showed him a rag smeared with the stuff; the smear was wonderfully brilliant and black. The Count glanced from it to the reflection of himself in a mirror hung up against the dark room.

"It will make my hair almost too black, I am afraid."

"No," said my father.

"No," repeated Mrs. Boyd, "either be dyed thoroughly or not at all. There can be no half-measures in dyeing," said she, turning to my mother and laughing.

"It will be necessary," said my father, "after I have applied the dye, that you should sit in the sun. Its rays will develop the hue rapidly. Whilst you are sitting we will go to lunch, and I will send you up a tray here, Count, and beg you not to shift for fear that you should remove your whisker out of the sun. After lunch I will dye the other whisker, and Bouville shall ring with praises of my discovery."

The Count sat down. My father poured some of the stuff into the saucer, and tickled the Count in fretting his whiskers to and fro, which made the little man laugh, and we all laughed. My father laid it on as though this one dose of dye was to last the Count forever.

"There," said he, backing away, as an artist from his canvas, with the saucer in one hand and the tooth-brush in the other. "Now keep quite still, and hold your head to the sun as you have it. What do you drink?"

"A little Bordeaux," said the Count, who sat stiff like an old lady with her hair dressed for a ball.

When we were at dinner, in the course of conversation, my mother asked Mrs. Boyd if she had seen anything of Mrs. Stuart lately.

"Mrs. Stuart!" exclaimed Mrs. Boyd. "She has left Bouville."

"Left Bouville!" echoed my mother.

"When?" inquired my father.

"About a week ago," Mrs. Boyd answered. "Something had occurred which upset her. What it was she would not tell. Old Lady Malcolm tried very hard to worm it out, but to no purpose."

My parents exchanged looks, and my mother, after some light expression of regret at the loss of an agreeable acquaintance, changed the subject.

We did not linger long at the meal. Count Pomade was sitting in the sun, and as soon as possible my mother rose, and we all went up-stairs again, for it had pleased me to

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see the Count dyed on one side, and I hoped, with boyish appetite for such things, to watch my father dyeing him on the other side immediately. We entered the studio, and after a brief pause filled with sensations, my mother and Mrs. Boyd broke into immoderate laughter. They could not restrain themselves. They were not to blame; the sight would have taxed the gravity of a saint at the stake. The whisker that had been dyed was a vivid green, and the effect was the more remarkable because of the self-complacent countenance it adorned. The Count had eaten his lunch, and his tray lay beside him, and he sat in the sun just as we had left him.

“What is there to amuse you, ladies?” he asked, darkening a little with a frown.

“I am afraid——” began my father, making a step, and speaking in a tone of vexation.

The Count sprang off his chair, glared into the looking-glass, shrieked a little, and then folding his arms tightly upon his breast, and exalting his few poor inches to their cracking point, he exclaimed: “You think this tomfoolery proper treatment to bestow upon a French nobleman, whose crime is his poverty.”

His poor little ashen withered face seemed to gather into a hundred wrinkles and his grin of rage was horrible.

“Tomfoolery!” cried my father. “I vow to God, Count, I believed the dye was the purest black, exactly as I showed you. Is it likely that I would apply that color? Is it likely, Mrs. Boyd?”

She continued to laugh: indeed she had lost all self-control, but my mother was calming down.

“I have been sitting in the sun for this!” exclaimed the enraged Count, striking his green whisker with his fist. “I have sat—for a headache—for this! Good God! what fools are men!”

He glared at the glass again, and turning to my father shouted:

"You will wash it out, sir ; you will wash it out at once," and he seated himself with a fiery eye and a very threatening scowl.

"Impossible," answered my father. "Such as it is, there it is, and I know nothing that can wash it out."

"Dye the other whisker, father," said I, "and then it will look all right."

"You must go down-stairs if you talk," said my mother, whilst the Count half started at me from his chair.

"I must have put something wrong into that dye," said my father.

"Could not a chemist be found to wash it out ?" exclaimed my mother.

"I am not going to allow strangers to be brought up here to witness my degradation," rejoined the Count, whose features were working like those of a monkey capering about a barrel organ.

"It is no degradation, Count ; how silly you are to think it so," said Mrs. Boyd.

Pomade looked at my father as if he would flay him.

"Suppose," exclaimed my mother cheerfully, "that the Count should shave. The hair will grow again all right."

The Count rose from his chair and approached my mother in three slow strides, grinning, but not with merriment. "You mean, madame, that I should go about Bouville with one whisker," he said.

"I'm afraid there's nothing for it but to shave," said my father ; "and upon my word, Count, the more I look at you the more I am persuaded that smooth cheeks would suit you. Little more than a moustache is worn in France."

The Count stalked to the looking-glass grimly silent, and surveyed himself. He then said in a voice ominously polite :

"May I trouble you to send one of your servants for a carriage?"

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This was done, and when the carriage was at the door the Count, with his coat collar turned up, and his pocket-handkerchief tied round his head, entered and drove away, merely answering my father's repeated apologies with dangerous looks. We afterwards learnt that sooner than lose his whisker, he kept his room till the dye faded. Very plaintive were the fiddle notes which proceeded from that room whilst the dye was vanishing. My father expected a challenge to fight a duel, and was restless and uneasy, and for some time ceased to take much interest in photography and chemicals. Possibly the Count was no fighting man ; no challenge was sent, but the expectation of such a thing made life very uncomfortable for my father.

Pomade cut us for some time after the fading of the dye had enraged him, then meeting my father one day in the street, he most unexpectedly skipped with the utmost cordiality across the road, and extended his hand.

"It is all right, you see," he exclaimed with a grin. "And whilst I lay hidden I set some verses of Alfieri to music, and with your permission will bring my fiddle and play, and in my poor voice sing, a melody which you shall pronounce my finest production."

"Come by all means," cried my father warmly, "and you shall not only sing your song, but I will give you my word I will listen to it."

CHAPTER IV.

SCHOOL.

IN the oldest part of the old town of Bouville there stood, and may yet stand, a house that was formerly a monastery. It was winged with cloisters and faced by a large square of playground. It was walled round about, just as the district was ramparted, but a small portion of the wall facing the flower-garden had fallen, and the gap was replaced by a hedge.

Though the house had been modernized, filled with bedrooms and eating-room, in which pale boys and cherry-cheeked boys sat in rows, and dined or studied, a more than monastic shadow hung upon the place to the eye that surveyed it from the outside. The cloisters had been converted into rooms in which fencing was taught, and boxing. The loud call or laugh of the boys might in the color of the day put the austere specters of the monks to flight; but they returned at nightfall. Boys had seen them standing in the doorways of the cloisters; others on peering through bedroom windows had beheld mysterious shapes moving in the deep gloom under the tall trees where the crows hung their nests, and these boys had crept back to bed, and their whispers confessed what their perspiration confirmed.

It should be strange if that building and its cloisters and grounds were not haunted, for it was built in the fourteenth century, and many miracles were worked in it. The monks had an image of Christ fastened to the cross and hung up in their chapel, and it is said that this figure

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frowned and smiled. It would also gaze sweetly and approvingly, or rebukingly turn its eyes away, according to the sins and penitence of the poor people who adored it. In later ages this extraordinary crucifix found its way into the hands of a curiosity dealer, and it was then discovered that the brow, mouth, and eyes were movable, and worked by the monks by pieces of line attached to each part. How excellent is credulity ! How good is superstition ! How desirable it is to be alarmed by the rolling eyes, and the contracting brow, and widening mouth of an effigy into the golden ways of virtue ! Depend upon it, those monks meant well, and if even one wretch was terrified into a wholesome life by their tricks the angels rejoiced. I could wish to hear of a workable ship's figurehead which converted a crew of drunken, swearing scoundrels into a body of respectable, steady seamen, and great would be the miracle that transformed the managing owner into a man glad to give his English sailors good food, and good pay and good accommodation, and plenty of hands for the working of the ship. Willingly would I sit behind such a figurehead and pull the strings.

This ancient monastic dwelling was now a boarding-school for young English gentlemen, kept by two parsons ; one a stooped, short, rather fat man whose boots creaked, and who was very proud of his white hands, and who, so it was said, was a first-class Greek and Latin scholar. His name was the Reverend Edward Cheshire ; the other was the Reverend William Dodson. Mr. Dodson held the lion's share in the school, occupied the house, and was a bachelor ; he kept a housekeeper, a little, hard, restless woman of about fifty-five, whose eyes snapped between the bunches of ringlets which stood blown up over each ear in cauliflower-wig fashion. Dodson, unlike Cheshire, was a tall man, a pink man ; he should have been an Albino ; his eyelashes were white, his whiskers a very pale ginger, his yellow hair as silky as a baby's.

To this school I was one day dragged. I do not mean to say that I was hauled by strong men through the streets ; but the heart that lay in me was so dreadfully heavy that my legs almost refused to carry it, and I staggered along by my mother's side, often saying, " I don't want to go to school. Why don't father send me to sea ? I want to be a sailor, not a beast of a schoolboy." And the shudder of an inward fit of blubbering would wrench me. And to these lamentations my mother would make answer :

" You must be educated, my dear child. You will come home every Sunday. Think of that ! It's not as if you were going to England. It's a splendid school, everybody praises it ; it is very expensive too, and be sure that the time you pass at school will be the happiest days of your life."

At this I could have howled. My father had often said the same thing, and in my boyish way I had scorned it as something unworthy of him ; as, in short, a *lie*. My mother needed all the courage her heart could yield her to keep up ; I behaved contemptibly, with a true want of spirit in yelping and wailing as we walked to the school. I was nine years old, and my sleeping out of the house for a single night made my going to school a serious separation to my mother.

My luggage had preceded me. We arrived at the great gate ; my mother pulled a long chain, and a hollow-toned bell rang slowly, and was still ringing in funeral beats, when a man with knock knees threw open the little door in the gate, and we entered.

We followed the knock-kneed man along a gravel walk beside a wide spread of flower-garden, which sweetly scented the air, and twinkled with butterflies. The house had a queer look, with its modern bay-windows and aged fabric abaft. I heard a strange sort of moaning noise, and believed it was boys locked up in bedrooms calling for help. It was a curious singing noise, which came and went in

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pulses of sound. I afterwards found out that it came through the open windows of the long schoolroom which occupied the upper part of the wing of Dodson's dwelling and terminated in the cloisters. The boys were at work.

The wide square of playground was empty. I saw a swing and frames for hanging by. I glanced fearfully at the cloisters, and thought they looked like cells in which boys could be locked up and left to starve without their friends being able to discover what had become of them. Some of us start in life in a morbid state of mind. In that state, certainly, did I begin my school-days. A boy who had seen a ghost could claim the quality of imagination, and I was sincerely and uncomfortably affected by the gloomy appearance of that ancient schoolhouse.

Its aspect of decay was made ghastly by the flaring bay windows. It was like clapping a cocked hat on a monk, or replacing the hood of the nun by a new Parisian bonnet, leaving her to clatter her beads in her customary garb. We were shown into the drawing-room. A schoolmaster's drawing-room is a severe scene of life to a little boy. There are too many books ; they are too handsomely bound ; they suggest the prizes won by boys at the cost of many pangs of flesh, and left by will to the master by the lads who had died. This was a very new drawing-room. The chairs looked never to be sat upon. A smell of sherry pervaded the atmosphere. We waited in silence, both being too much awed to converse.

In about five minutes Mr. Dodson came from the school-room, very pink and tall, and hard.

"So this is our young friend," said he, extending his hand to me. "Master Longmore, I think."

"Shake hands, Walter," said my mother.

I staggered very awkwardly and walked in a one-sided way up to him, lifting a stiff arm. He just touched my hand, and then said with alarming familiarity :

"Now Longmore, run into the playground and amuse

yourself with the swing until school is over, whilst your mother and I have a few words."

I made a great outcry when it came to my mother taking me in her arms and saying good-bye. We had never before been separated. I blubbered with all my might, resolved that the schoolmaster should comprehend the extent of my sufferings. He cried out: "What! is it possible that a young English lad of spirit should act like a little girl in the presence of his mother? Would you be tied to your mother's apron-strings all your life?"

I thought in my heart, yes, I would, then!

He took me by the arm, led me to the house door, and told me to run away into that playground yonder, past the iron railing, and he advised me not to let the boys see what a girl I was making of myself. There was no virtue in this to stiffen me with any sensation of manhood; I felt the most forlorn, wretched, neglected, illused boy that the world had ever heard of. No castaway with matted hair and streaming shirt rolling out of the foam of the comber on to the beach of a desert island, and rising and looking about him could have felt more hopeless and forsaken. I continued to blubber freely, but nevertheless gazed about me with the active curiosity of childhood, and listened to the bee-like humming of boy's voices in the air about the open windows of the schoolroom. Presently, hearing footsteps, I looked round and saw my mother leaving the house, escorted by his reverence the headmaster. She kissed her hand to me; would have called perhaps, but her voice might have stuck. It was too much. I could have dashed myself to the earth. I could have rolled over and over again in the insupportable affliction of this separation.

Many boys are manly; they go to school as if they liked it; if they weep, it is in the midnight hour, and their tears are therefore secret. That the Collingwoods and Nelsons, Hawkes, Jervises, and others were made out of boys of this manly sort it would be rash to affirm in the face of historic

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evidence. The Iron Duke no doubt made a splendid school-boy, but Nelson could shed bitter tears as a child, and Collingwood, when a boy in the hour of farewell and forlornness, wept without effort of concealment upon the gun he leaned against.

I own that I hated going to school; that all the while I was at school I continued to detest the restraint and the task, the food, the prayers that dismissed us hungry to bed.

When Mr. Dodson had seen my mother through the gate, he came along to the playground and passed me on his way to the schoolroom, but took not the slightest notice of me. I was another bird in his pie, plucked and plump, and so he went up-stairs by the wide stairs under the cloistered arches into that long strange room full of open windows and just now silent.

I hung about like a marooned sailor till a clock struck four. This was immediately followed by a sound as though they were firing volleys of musketry in the schoolroom. The voices of boys talking freely hummed richly into the air, and then in thunder down the staircase rolled with whistle, shriek, and shout, a long stream of boys of all sizes, and different as they were numerous, saving two boys who were twins, fat and sluggish, looking as though they were twenty-five years old, though they were not fourteen; so absurdly alike that the head of one was often punched in mistake for that of the other, and I have known one of them get out of a difficulty by saying that his brother did it. It was idle for the brother to protest. The master could not distinguish. Somebody must be whipped, and as one twin was slightly fatter than his brother, he usually got the stripes whether he was guilty or not, so tempting is roundness, and what Squeers called oiliness, to schoolmasters.

The boys covered the ground with running, rushing, leaping, flying figures. They split the air with their throats. A smooth-faced man of the complexion of tallow,

his hair combed behind his ears, and his blue brows shaved into a suggestion of lofty intellect, came up and asked in broken English who I was. I told him.

"I'm one of the French masters," said he, speaking kindly. "Are you fresh from England?"

"No, I aren't," I replied.

"Nothing to be ashamed of if you were," said he; "and it is necessary that you should address me as sir, and say sir to the other masters."

"I ain't a Frenchman," said I, determined to have this matter put right.

"Do you dislike the French?" asked this master, squinting through some defect of nerve whilst he smiled.

"They don't fight fair," I replied. "They kick you on the shins, and run away if you give them a bloody nose, and they throw stones."

He laughed at this with much good-nature, and then calling to a boy, said :

"Rawdon, take this new boy, and play with him. Show him the cloisters, and run him about to dry his eyes, for he's an English boy."

The sarcasm was lost, and he walked off. After this I have no very clear recollection of what became of me. I may have played with Rawdon. A lad ran away with my cap. I gave chase, and hit him on the head, and by other tokens made him understand I desired to fight him.

"Take your dirty cap," says he, flinging it at me, and he shot off. My spirited conduct on this occasion was not lost. Certain senior boys had observed what passed, and though nothing was said, I afterwards knew I had produced a favorable impression.

At half-past four somebody rang a bell. I believe it was the knock-kneed man, and we passed in, a cloud of boys, out of the playground into the room where the meals were served. This room was as ancient as any other part of the building. It was lofty, and long, and was furnished with

three tables and benches, and a rather shorter table cross-wise at the bottom. At intervals, like the large iron nuts which keep a ship's chain-plates fixed, were trenchers of half loaves of bread cut into bread and butter, then reshaped into the original half loaf with the crust on top. We trooped in and took our seats, and a gallant show of boys we made—lemon-haired, black-haired, brown-haired, all true blue : even my young heart leaped up at the sight of my country's children. How different the gentlemanly well-bred English schoolboy from the French boy, no matter how well-bred and gentlemanly! No talking was allowed. At the head and foot of each table sat a master, who was served with a cup of tea and an egg as a relish to his bread and butter. To us boys was handed by the knock-kneed man a mug of liquor resembling milk and water.

I found myself sitting beside young Rawdon. I was about to begin, and stretched forth my hand to seize the crust that crowned the half loaf in front of me ; Rawdon seized my arm, and said in a whisper : " You must not begin until after grace, and till you're told to. "

He was about ten years of age, was this young Rawdon. His hair was golden, and no handsomer or more refined boy did any British mother of breeding hug to her heart. A lad opposite made menacing faces at me. I did not know till afterwards that he meant I should not snatch at the crust, which was the choice prize and eager expectation of every boy who had not the toothache. Mr. Dodson came in and said grace at the cross table. He was much too thankful, I thought. I looked in vain for jams, buns, any addition or supplement to those grim hillocks of bread and butter. Why did he take so long to be thankful for half a mugful of thin milk and water and the sliced loaves, more particularly as he did not participate in the feast, but walked out after a shrill general delivery of " Amen " that closed, perhaps not with conviction, his windy periods?

"Begin," shouted the master who taught English. He was an Irishman, named O'Connor, a poor dingy man who had taken high honors at Dublin University, had filled good posts in England, had been forced to fly through debt; and now with maturer sight I can see poverty and grief, and an inward rage of heart in his face, and in his face also spoke eloquently the demon of drink which for years had found a bed in his liver. God rest him!

The moment the order to begin was shouted ninety hands darted forth on each side the tables and broke the loaves to pieces. Fierce was that first snatching, and every boy looked to see what pieces the other had. I munched away at a thick slice of bread and butter, and peering into my mug asked Rawdon if I could have some tea.

"Silence!" exclaimed the French master who had accosted me in the playground. His name was Mascot.

I was to be revenged, however, in a minute for this snub, for when Mr. Mascot sliced off the top of his egg he uttered a cry of horror which caused every eye in the room to be directed at him. His grimaces of nausea were imitable. His shrugs expressive of ill usage to the other masters I cannot describe. His egg was full of blood, and had he received news of the death of his mother or the loss of all his savings, he could not have made more of this business by pantomime, dumb-show, and grimaces.

While Mr. Mascot was posture-making, Mr. O'Connor, who sat at the other table, opened his egg which, strange to relate, proved also rotten and full of blood.

"Bedad!" he shouted, starting up in a sudden sickness, "it was ripe enough to fly! Where's Ambroise? I am not to be cheated out of my egg."

"Nor am I," echoed Mr. Mascot.

Who fetched Ambroise, the knock-kneed man, or how he was summoned, I forget. He arrived, looked at the eggs, and admitted that they might have been fresher.

"The likes of such boiling is murder, not cooking,"

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said Mr. O'Connor, at which sally of Irish humor several senior boys at that table laughed loudly. Fresh eggs were brought, and we boys went on eating bread and butter.

The silence was the hard part. I wanted to ask questions. I perceived, however, that we were permitted to read. A number of copies of *Household Words* lay upon the tables, and upon these the boys pored whilst they munched. It was a wonderful scene to me, who had never beheld so many boys all at once in one room before. The westering sun shone upon the tall, narrow windows the upper portions of which were of red glass, and the big room was filled by a soft and beautiful light in which the eyes of the boys sparkled and the fair hair of them shone. Mr. Dodson seemed to know when we had finished tea without being told, for he came in rather mysteriously, and said grace, and this grace was all too long for impatient boys and for such a tea. The masters rose, and all the boys rose, making a roaring noise through pushing the forms in so doing, and we then rushed away into the playground, freeing our pipes in shrill calls the instant we were clear of that long eating-room, and the crows, high in the tall, silent trees, answered us with their funereal notes.

I began to forget myself in running about and swinging, in chasing, and in being chased. It is the pleasure of boys of the age I then was to run after each other often in circles. One pursues the other, commonly with some thirsty resolution to fight him if he should come up with him. But should he overtake him the thirst of his resolution is quenched. There may happen a slight shower of fists with closed eyes. Then the boys begin to run in a circle again. It is boys' pleasure.

I was now beginning to think that having plenty of companions of my own age to play with was better than aimlessly wandering about a lonely garden, and hunting in dry ditches for unimagined things. I was hanging by a bar

when I heard a bell, and perceived a general movement of the boys towards the cloistered staircase. In a very few moments the ground was empty, and I was left alone hanging by the bar. Presently I spied the figure of a man observing me from one of the windows of the schoolroom. it disappeared, and in a minute there arrived Mr. Dodson, who approached me with very long strides. I dropped from the bar.

“Don’t you know that preparation has begun, sir?” he exclaimed. “Do you suppose that your mother placed you here to do nothing but play?”

“I don’t know what you want,” I answered.

“I’ll tell you,” he exclaimed, and gripping my wrist he bore me off to the cloisters.

As I did not know what Mr. Dodson meant to do with me, I felt very frightened, and my heart beat fast, and the home yearning was strong as I accompanied him up the broad staircase into a great schoolroom. This was a novel picture indeed. The sun colored it as it had colored the room we ate in, and the eye of memory preserves that first impression as though I had looked upon a vivid painting. The long floor was covered with desks filled with boys. There were separate desks for the masters, and a sort of throne at each end of the room for Mr. Cheshire and Mr. Dodson. I remember a stove with a flue like a boa-constrictor glutted with boys and making its way through a hole in the wall. I also recollect an immense map of the United States hung between two windows. Mr. Dodson took me up to Mr. O’Connor and said :

“Discover his degree of proficiency. I fear it is *nil*. Put him in his place, and set him a task of preparation.”

“Can you read?” said Mr. O’Connor.

“Yes,” I answered.

“Sir—say ‘sir’ if you please,” cried O’Connor ; “read that,” and he put a volume of Goldsmith’s “History of England” in my hand.

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I read a dozen or twenty lines, stuttering at one or two words. Mr. O'Connor then said:

"That will do. Can you write?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Sit up here," said he, "and let me see how beautifully you can write."

He hoisted me on to his own stool and dictated a letter home in very simple words: "I am very happy, and would not go home again for anything. There is no place like school, where bed is hard and eggs are bad."

I took this down with the utmost gravity: he read it, tore it up, and told me to follow him. We walked to the bottom of the schoolroom, and at the end desk, which meant the bottom of the very bottom class, I took my seat with some little English book before me, from which I was expected to commit a page to memory. They called this preparation.

I do not recollect that I once looked at that little book. My eyes roamed over the schoolroom and more particularly was I interested in the boys who sat near me. Two of them were the twins who looked twenty-five years old. You would have expected to find them in the very first class, talking and reading Greek and Latin with the Rev. Mr. Cheshire, who taught those languages. The slightly fatter one of the two said to me in a greasy whisper across the desk, after glancing behind at Mr. Dodson, who occupied his throne not far off:

"That's right, don't trouble to learn; no new boy is expected to know anything."

"I will trouble you to hold your tongue," said Mr. Dodson, peering pink and stern over his glasses at the fat twin who was instantly absorbed in his task.

The silence maintained was peculiar, pervaded by a straining undertone which was not sound. It was the motion of many lips busy in preparing the morrow's lesson.

Presently the fat twin, after a peep at Mr. Dodson, who

sat behind Gaglianani's newspaper, whispered across in his oily voice to me: "What made you come to school? I wouldn't be you if you aren't clever. Can you speak French?"

"Mowbray senior, step out!" exclaimed the stern voice of Mr. Dodson.

The fat lad, turning very pale, threw a stout leg over the form and walked very reluctantly to the head-master's desk. Something was going to happen, and the boys suspended the business of preparation to watch.

"I had already told you not to speak during study," said the head-master, picking up a piece of wood shaped like a small cricket-bat; "and you'll have to learn at all costs that obedience is the very first principle of your duty whilst you are with me. Hold out your hand, sir."

I stared in silent horror. A boy was about to be punished and I was to be an eye-witness! Did it hurt? What a frightful piece of wood to hit a fellow's hand with! The pale, fat twin put out his hand, but dodged the instant the master struck, and three times did he jerk back his hand as swiftly as that small cricket bat was flourished, until Mr. Dodson stepped out of his throne, without any visible loss of temper, and catching Mowbray senior by his jacket collar, turned him over his knee. No need to smooth his breeks for the blow. That boy sat tightly enough in his small-clothes. In an instant you would have believed that a carpet was being beaten, that a strong boy had hidden himself under it, and was roaring out to be rescued. Mowbray senior yelled with all his might, and Dodson dusted him with vigor. Such writhings and contortions of that fat and smarting figure! The skirts of Mr. Dodson's long clerical coat swung stately as he raised his bat in the air. The agony of the twin-brother, who sat two boys from me, I recall without being able to express, for I see it in memory. His form projected across the desk, clutching it. I remember the stare of despair and wrath and helplessness that

started his eyes from their sockets—the general expression of “Oh, won’t I just write home about this !”

“Let this teach you obedience,” said Mr. Dodson, releasing the fat boy, who came rubbing himself, blubbered, shamefaced, as purple as he was before pale, to his place.

It had been a tremendous scene for me to witness, and I trembled exceedingly, and a little boy by my side was equally afraid, and rooted his eyes to his book, and whispered the page aloud to himself in an agony of good intention. My home yearning was strong when I looked at the slobbered twin, and I made up my mind that if ever Mr. Dodson should disgrace me as he had disgraced that boy, by beating me before the whole school, I would run away.

CHAPTER V.

A SCHOOL TRAGEDY.

I FORGET at what hour preparation came to an end ; it was then dark, and lamps, like the lamps over billiard tables, were lighted. The knock-kneed Ambroise entered, staggering under the load of a basket of dry bread, of which every boy took one piece. He then made the rounds with a jar of cold water and a tin vessel, and every boy who was thirsty drank. This was our supper, and I have eaten better since.

We now went to prayers ; the boys knelt along the benches or forms, and Mr. Dodson read from the Prayer-Book. One boy laughed all the time ; he shook with merriment behind the fingers which hid his face. I feared if Mr. Dodson caught sight of him we should have a second representation of the fat twin scene. It was pure nervousness in the poor little beggar, who, no doubt, heartily wished that he could be as composed as Mr. Dodson himself. To flog or in any way punish a lad for unseasonable laughter is inhuman. Charles Lamb laughed whilst attending funerals or weddings, though he earnestly prayed for gravity. Nervous people laugh aloud in church. A nervous man, whilst telling me that his mother was dead and his sister in a dying condition, laughed ceaselessly throughout the recital of his sorrows, though the poor fellow's heart was bleeding.

Some of the boys in the neighborhood of the shaking lad grinned profoundly in sympathy ; this set me off, and I found myself smiling like an idiot, whilst Mr. Dodson

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grunted in prayer. Happily, the boy's merriment escaped attention, and when prayers were ended we went to bed.

We trooped down-stairs in a thunder of feet, and passed through the playground to the house where the dormitories were. Here we put on our slippers. The moon rode high, and the playground stretched pale and ghastly. The shadows of the trees swept in ebony across the grounds, but the early autumn leaves on high hung in a mass of motionless, misty silver. I looked at the cloisters where the room was in which fencing was taught, and thought that I should not like to sleep alone in that place ; in fact, I should not have been willing to sleep even with a big boy in it. Certain senior boys, however, did occupy the bedrooms there, over the fencing-room, and one of them was the son of the Rev. Mr. Cheshire.

Our shadows walked beside us in the moonlight as we stepped across the yard, and I now think they were the only substantial part of the procession. A single flight of steps in a house next to the head-master's residence led to a large bedroom—how many occupied it, I do not remember. I was one who slept in that room ; a row of beds went down on the side I occupied, and there were beds between the windows opposite. A long, narrow, central stand or table looked scorbutic, with its outbreak of basins for the boys to wash in. At the end of the room was a door through which two or three of the masters passed to their sleeping apartments.

We were not to be troubled by the masters yet. They did not arrive until after supper, and meantime, the monitors were supposed to keep us quiet. But in truth they were amongst the noisiest. An old woman, named Wilkinson, a sort of deputy-housekeeper, had followed in our tail to show me my bed, then vanished before the boys fell upon her. This little bed was at the bottom of the row of beds, with a chair beside it. I found my night-shirt placed for me, and jumped into bed to get out of the way.

The long sleeping-room had changed into a wild, extraordinary scene of half-naked, rushing, leaping figures of boys, who yelled in thrilling notes as they chased one another with slippers and knotted towels. It was a novel picture of life to me after my quiet little bedroom in the cottage, and I wondered what my mother would think if she saw it. Boys leaped in and out of bed like hares, disappeared, emerged, whooped, and here and there a stand-up fight was making bloody progress. The room was imperfectly lighted by a few cheap candles, placed at intervals upon the long washstand. But the moon streamed in through the four high undraped windows, and the white dry boards shone with lakes of glittering moonlight which shimmered into the atmosphere off the floor.

A boy was sitting up in his bed alongside mine, watching the flying and yelling confusion of figures in night-dresses. (They had a look of plucked turkeys, with their thin legs and white bodies.) I peered at my neighbor, and discovered that he was Rawdon.

"What a row they make," said he; "do you want to go to sleep?"

"No, I like watching them," I answered. "How long does it go on for?"

"Mr. Mascot will be up at nine, and every boy will rush to bed, for any boy caught out of bed when the French master arrives has to learn fifty lines of French before breakfast, and he is made to stand upon a form whilst he learns it."

The noise was so great that it was difficult to talk, but it calmed down presently, owing to a number of boys getting into bed and stopping there. And some time before Mr. Mascot arrived, the whole of the boys were in bed.

Suddenly at the other end of the room a sweet girlish voice began to sing. A second followed, a third, and a fourth. They sang an old English glee, and their tones to my young unaccustomed ear swelled in such harmonies

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that I might have believed I had gone to Heaven, and was listening to the quiring of the angels. I imagined they sung a hymn. All the rest of us lay mute, listening. How sweet, clear, high-reaching, pure, was the silver note of the boy who had started that glee ! This voice rang in a penetrating rejoicing, triumphing way through the others, mounting, sinking, circling them ; and when those little singers had ceased, such was the hush in that bedroom, that the peace of God seemed to have come down upon us, even as the moonshine reposed upon the floor.

After the glee was over, the boy with the pure high note sang "Annie Laurie." I listened in an ecstasy of delight. The best music I had ever heard was Count Pomade's, which was as bad as bad could be, and it was rendered more hideous to my childish imagination by the several lunatic, and, for the most part, terrifying expressions his withered little face put on, one after another, when the fiddle was in his neck, and he had begun to saw. This was beautiful English music, sung by a boy with a lovely silver voice, and I listened to him by the moonlight.

"Does he sing every night ?" I asked Rawdon.

"Nearly."

"How jolly !" said I. "I shall be glad of bedtime to hear him. What's his name ?"

"Mowbray," answered Rawdon.

"The fat boy that was beaten this evening ?" I asked.

It proved no other, but never could I have supposed that the throat which had delivered such howls of anguish as he had sent up in torment could also have contained such powers and possibilities of sweetest melody when exerted in pleasure, and to delight.

Mr. Mascot came in at nine, and walked slowly down the room, blowing out the candles and looking to right and left. He was followed by two other masters, and the three disappeared through the door at the extremity. But I now found, though we were not allowed to sing, we were

permitted to talk in subdued tones. Strange to my ear were the voices of the boys, lifting and falling along the beds in waves of whisper. The moon was still strong in the room, and I could distinguish the glimmering face of Rawdon by it as he sat up in his narrow bed alongside.

"Sleepy?" said he.

"No," I answered.

"What's your father?"

"A gentleman. What's yours?"

"A soldier."

"Is he strong?"

"He could cut off a man's head in a single stroke."

"What are you going to be?" said I.

"I am going to be a sailor," he answered.

"So am I!" I shrieked in a sudden fit of sympathetic excitement, which caused a monitor somewhere away in the shadow to cry in the voice of a boy who was breaking into manhood: "Silence! Order! Shut up, you young beast down there!"

This frightened me, and I lay down.

"Don't go to sleep," said Rawdon. "I want to talk to you. When are you going to sea?"

I sat up again and answered softly, with a cautious look in the direction of the voice which was breaking into manhood. "When I leave school."

"I am going into the Navy," said young Rawdon. "I mean to get appointed to a beautiful frigate. She shall have decks as white as almonds, and when she leans over you will see the gold upon her keel. Her sails will be like the moonlight on that floor, and she will have fifty-one guns."

This fair-haired boy was apparently a dreamer. "I mean to be wrecked in her," he continued, "and cast away upon an island, and live by myself all alone."

"Aren't you afraid of savages?" I asked.

"I should build a fort and defy them," he answered.

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"I wish you'd take me," said I.

"I'd rather live alone," he said. "There's no fun when you've got somebody to talk to. There was no comfort for Crusoe after Friday joined him."

"Do you come from England?" I asked.

He stared at me, and laughed and said, "Yes."

"So do I," said I, "but I never was there. I am English, though I was born in this town."

Meanwhile all round that long sleeping-room swept the low, mysterious sound of boys' whispered talk.

"There are ghosts in our playground," said he, with the irrelevancy of youth.

"I have seen a ghost," said I.

"Where?"

"In a pond in my father's garden."

"What was it like?"

"A beautiful woman."

"Did it chase yer?"

"No, it stood up, and when we came back it had melted. I met it afterwards, when it had become a little girl—a pretty little girl, just like it, called Belle Stuart."

"Does she live in Bouville?"

"She has left the town with her mother."

"I am in love," said he, "with a prettier girl than yours, but shall not marry her until I have been shipwrecked, and have made a large fortune."

Here I yawned. The gentle hand of sleep was passing and repassing my eyes. Rawdon's voice grew thick, and his language unmeaning, and lying back I fell asleep at once, as only a tired boy can. Irrecoverable privilege of Youth! To the Ancient Mariner it was the gift of Mary Mother; to other mariners not ancient it is, alas! too often the subduing influence of the whisky bottle and the drug.

I do not intend to detain you with the dry relation of my schooldays; how we rose, prayed, breakfasted, studied,

dined, played and the like. Indeed the pirate Time has scratched a good deal of the silver off this mirror, and I distinguish in it with difficulty. I remember that we rose at six in the summer, which I thought very uncomfortable, and my earliest recollection of the long washstand, where we stood stripped to the waist, each at a basin, is that of a little specter of a pigeon-breasted boy opposite—very freckled, with arms which the grave could not have made leaner; he often coughed, his eyes were bright, and his naked pigeon breast yearned piteously. What fond mother had sent this poor lamb bleating so far away from her? Rather would not it be a stepmother? Why was that boy to be taught Latin and Greek and French? Even I, though little more than a baby, could see that he was shaping a straight course for the churchyard, and the grave is a place where not even the dead languages are spoken.

Then after we had washed, would come the walk to the schoolroom; prayers which fell cold and forbidding in Mr. Dodson's heartless delivery; much studying on exceedingly empty stomachs—I count that boy supperless that goes to bed on a dry crust and a drink of water; breakfast in the long room, the same midship heaps of pale brown cut loaf, the same grace, the same snatching, eggs for the masters, not always rotten, and then we would go to school again.

Cheshire took the senior boys, and was a very gentlemanly refined, accomplished man. His boys held him in veneration. I never drew near unto him, no, not by the whole length of the schoolroom. My unfortunate lot was cast at that end which was presided over by Mr. Dodson of the bat, and, my God! how unsparing was that same parson in his use of that same coaxer!

The first blow I got was after I had been at school three days. I persisted in some blunder. Dodson thought me wilfully obstinate.

“Hold out your hand, sir.”

I held out my hand, and took the stroke without lodging.

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It was a tingling, aching, bone-breaking blow ; it seemed to paralyze my arm to the elbow. I looked at my fingers with the tears in my eyes, but was superior to noise.

“ Try now again,” said the reverend gentleman, planting his gold pince-nez upon his nose. I did so, and this time made the correct reply.

“ I am sorry,” said Mr. Dodson with sickening gravity—and Heavens ! how I detested his pink face then, and how penetrating was the atmosphere of sherry in which he moved and had his being—“ that boys are not to be courted by kindness into committing their lessons to heart. This stick is as distasteful to me to use as it is for you to feel, and the less you oblige me to employ it, the more I shall be grateful. ”

But it was an invention of his own, unlike any other weapon ever used by a schoolmaster, and he tasted the pride of the inventor in each application of it. He had written a ghastly joke upon the flat of the wood. A boy once said to him :

“ Why should I hold out my hand, sir ? ”

And Mr. Dodson had answered :

“ Why should you not ? ”

This answer he had turned about in his mouth, and relished with such poor quality of humor as he possessed, and shortly after he had struck the questioning boy over the hand, he dipped a pen in ink and wrote upon the wooden blade of torture in big letters—“ Why not ? ” That was Dodson’s idea of a joke. Possibly it endeared the invention to his mind. Who was the carpenter that shaped this engine for him ? I was too young to ask then. Perhaps they have met in the hot quarters of the future, and through all eternity it may be that Dodson, running, smites the flying carpenter, and the carpenter then seizes the weapon and whacks the bolting parson.

I went home every Sunday after church, and my first Sunday at home was a very important day to me. I spoke

derisively of the school, and told my father and mother that Mr. Dodson was an uneducated man, who beat the boys without being able to teach them.

"All boys want whipping from time to time," said my father. "You look more of a man, and the grain of your skin looks cleaner than when you were at home. Do they feed you well?"

"They starve me," said I sullenly.

"On what?" asked my father, whilst my mother sat regarding me anxiously.

"They give you nothing but dry bread for supper," said I.

"What for breakfast?"

"Bread and butter, and chalk and water."

"Much as you can eat?"

"Yes," I answered.

"And what for dinner?"

"Mutton and beef and stickjaw. When they get stickjaw the boys go out and put their fingers down their throats and make themselves sick."

"Potatoes and bread and vegetables—then bread and butter for tea; more would make the boys feel uncomfortable," said my father. "Here are too francs, and depend upon it, as I have always told you, the time that you are now passing will be the happiest days of your life."

I took a quiet walk with my mother that first Sunday afternoon, and she entreated me to do nothing likely to provoke Mr. Dodson or the other masters into beating me. We went down to the harbor, and I looked at the grimy colliers and the smacks and the green waters winking with the flight of gulls and the flash of foam, and thought of the beautiful frigate that Rawdon was to be shipwrecked in.

It was harder to return to school that Sunday than to go for the first time. It unsettled my spirits. My mother put a packet of chocolate into my pocket, but it did not

help me. I told her in as much agony of mind as a small boy can feel that school was horrible, lessons disgusting, getting up early in the morning beastly ; "and they're always saying grace, and they're always saying prayers," I whined, "and I'm not being taught anything." Nevertheless, at the hour of half-past seven, my father pulled the long chain, which set the hollow-tongued bell swinging, and when Ambroise opened the door in the gate, I ran in and made my way upstairs out of the calm, cool evening air into the hot schoolroom, where the lamps were burning, and where the boys were getting a number of verses of the Psalms by heart.

There on his throne sat Mr. Dodson, who, when I came in, called me to him, and, after hoping that my parents were well, set me three verses to learn. Never to this day do I say to myself, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful," but that scene of hot schoolroom, full of boys and masters, rises as to the wand of the magician, and whilst I am still under the influence of the bewilderment caused by language which I could not understand, I still feel as I then felt, that it was Mr. Dodson who sat in the seat of the scornful, and that it was the man who avoided him who was blest.

How little did that hard, pink, yellow, sherry-flavored parson know what was to befall his school that night ! I have said that in the cloisters over the rooms in which fencing and boxing were taught, were bedrooms occupied by some of the senior boys. Two of these were young Cheshire and another fellow I will call Johnson. If I gave him his real name, I should be obliged to take it from one of the oldest families in England, a family renowned in history for the warriors and politicians it has produced. I had seen but little of Johnson, yet enough to impress him upon my memory, and I preserve the image of a

handsome lad of some eighteen to twenty years of age, with dark hair, and dark brown, melting eyes, full of expression, and an air of languor or disdain, which he carried with him even in his sports.

Now, it seems, for it must be told, that young Johnson had fallen in love with an English girl, who lived at Bouville. Some of the boys had seen her, and afterwards talked mysteriously of her as of something wicked. They said she was very fair and plump, with bewitching blue eyes.

This night he went to bed as usual, and as it was Sunday the boys refrained from skylarking, and lay in their beds talking quietly. The moon had gone away to the other side of the house, but the row of cheap candles were burning, awaiting the arrival of Mr. Mascot to extinguish them.

I had preserved the chocolate my mother gave me to divide with Rawdon, and we munched lovingly side by side in our little beds. He was very dreamy and fanciful this evening. He told me about the Phantom Ship, and explained that she was the ghost of a ship, and never could die, but walked the seas in the whiteness of mist or cloud in the shape she wore when her timbers groaned and her sails were clothed with thunder. This was a delicious subject for two small boys to get upon, both of them filled with impassioned sea-instincts, and sailors at heart, though one of them had never crossed the Channel, nor put further to sea than the end of Bouville pier.

Whilst we talked we heard a noise of firearms. The sound was unmistakable. It was a sharp, glass-like crack—one only, but all the boys heard it, and all started up in their beds, one exclaiming—

“It was a pistol!”

Another—“Have thieves broken in?”

A third—“By Golly! what joke’s going on, I wonder?”

Then several of the taller boys sprang from their beds and went to the windows, and stood straining their sight

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into the gloom. The smaller boys remained in bed, awed and wondering. We heard footsteps in the direction of the playground, but one of the boys at the window said there was nothing to be seen.

“What’s happened?” said young Rawdon. “It was a pistol shot. My brother has a pistol, and it makes just that noise when it’s let off.”

The boys came from the windows and got into bed, and the room was filled with strange whisperings, and sometimes a boy with the hope of frightening us youngsters would sing out—“Is that a man in a mask in the door there?” Or another would call—“Are they planting a ladder against our windows? If they’re armed, what are we going to do?”

“Let’s get up and dress,” said a voice.

This proposal, however, met with no response, and we continued to lie wide awake, listening, wondering, and talking.

Nine o’clock struck; we were still all wide awake and lay talking. Nothing could appeal more romantically to the imagination of boys than the sound of a pistol-shot heard at night. Some of the lads talked of galloping highwaymen and mail-coaches roaring along, with the coachmen shot through the head lying in the road, and a wounded man bleeding to death outside, and a dead man upon the straw inside, with his wife raving mad over him. Rawdon told me stories about pirates. He said that if his frigate was not wrecked, he would escape from her on some dark night by jumping overboard, and swim to a pirate which he would join, and in time command. He did not explain that the frigate would be at anchor when he jumped overboard, or did I trouble him to suggest that it must prove very inconvenient to a pirate to bring up within gun-shot of a British man-of-war. I took it all in, and my mouth was wide enough open to receive more than his youthful imagination had power to convey.

Mr. Mascot and the other masters were very late ; the candles were burning low ; they were guttering and stinking when the French master entered alone. We were as dumb as fish in a pond. He walked in very slowly, and began to put out the lights, but he easily saw that we were all of us awake. Our eyes shone brilliantly over the edge of the quilt, and many of us kicked and plunged, restless with curiosity, feverish to learn the good news that Mr. Dodson's house had been broken into.

Suddenly one of the monitors sitting up in his bed exclaimed in French : " Mr. Mascot, we heard a pistol fired ; will you tell us what has happened ? "

" I do not know why I should not," he answered in a raven note, coming to a stand abreast of the candle he was about to puff at, and casting a slow and solemn look around the room. " You will hear of it in the morning—why not now ? "

The beds bristled with our figures ; he mused as if taking counsel with himself ; possibly he delayed the news that he might enjoy the general expectation ; he then said : " Boys, I am sorry to tell you that Johnson has committed suicide by shooting himself with a pistol."

Not an exclamation was uttered, not even by the oldest amongst us. Could this piece of extraordinary and tragic intelligence be realized without reflection and conversation ? Indeed, for my part, I did not know what the word suicide meant, but I quite understood that Johnson had killed himself with a pistol, and that the report we had heard was his own sentence of death.

We talked in whispers deep into that night, and the big boys frightened the smaller boys with stories of murder. Next morning when we crossed the playground to the schoolroom I remember the shuddering gaze I directed at the scene of suicide. Though the blinds were down the windows were open, and as we advanced a sister of mercy drew aside a blind and looked out. She called to a second,

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and now two sisters of mercy peered. French sisters are very devoted, cheerful nurses, and so far from finding their clothes gloomy and oppressive as others complain, I have always seen something to amuse me in the garb of the sister of charity, particularly in the back view of her, for then she takes a true Dutch build if her capacious pockets be tolerably stocked, as they usually are.

Shortly after we had assembled in the schoolroom, the masters being in their places, Mr. Dodson arrived, wearing black cloth trousers ; he walked solemnly with a bowed head to his desk. We held our breath, but before he would speak we must have prayers, and to prayers we went, and something of fervency seemed mingled with Mr. Dobson's usual dull, formal, and insipid delivery. We rose rustling from our knees, like the rush of pinions in a sudden soaring of frightened wild-fowl, and then Mr. Dobson told us what most of us already knew, that Johnson had shot himself. In the face of the grief the young man's friends would feel when the news reached them, it was not for him to pronounce upon Johnson's dreadful and tremendous act.

"But I have to ask you, boys, not to go sitting down in a hurry to write home to your parents about it. There is no need whatever to alarm them, and I will thank you one and all if you will hold your tongues, leaving Mr. Cheshire and myself to make the necessary communications."

We thought him an artful old codger, and most of the boys whose friends lived in England pined to write by the next post. I rather fancy that no opportunity was allowed them for writing. The school, however, did not suffer from the tragic matter. Indeed our numbers were enlarged by the wobegone faces of five or six new boys who arrived from England at mid-quarter.

The story of the suicide was this : I got it bit by bit afterwards. Johnson on that Sunday afternoon had drunk tea with the mother of his plump beauty with the gay blue eyes. He afterwards walked with the young lady, and

proposed to her. She rejected him with laughter, as being a boy, and told him she was already engaged. He returned at the usual hour, attended prayers; then walked quietly to his bedroom in the cloisters. Cheshire went with him. A lamp was burning upon the little round table in the middle of the room. Johnson stepped to the drawer and took out something, and came to the table upon which he leaned, breathing heavily.

“What is the matter?” said Cheshire, not yet observing the thing that Johnson grasped.

The poor young fellow in broken speech told his story—how she had laughed at him, how she had degraded him—and she was to be married to another! He raised his hand slowly. Cheshire sprang round the table.

“By God!” cried Johnson, starting back so as to keep the table between them, “if you attempt to stop me I will shoot you and then kill myself!”

Cheshire shrank from the leveled weapon, the barrel of which the unhappy young man then thrust into his own mouth, and fell dead in a flash of light and a blast of noise—

“ You held your course without remorse
To make him trust his modest worth,
And last, you fix'd a vacant stare,
And slew him.”

CHAPTER VI.

I BUY A GUN.

SCHOOLMASTERS in my time talked of quarters ; now they speak of terms. Little boys when asked how old they are will answer eight and three-quarters, or seven and a quarter ; they will not spare themselves a week. The schoolmaster probably borrowed his hint of quarters from his boys, and terms from their fathers.

I had passed several quarters at the Revs. Dodson and Cheshire's school, when a very wicked idea was put into my head by Rawdon, a boy I loved, I adored, I worshiped. But then it is not in the power of language to express how deep may be the love of a boy for another boy. Never will he love the woman of his choice as he loved his school-mate. And yet in after years he may meet him and remember his passion, the kindling admiration with which he watched him leaping, running, kicking a ball, fencing, and he will laugh when he sees the same boy, the pride and delight of his youth, grown up into a stout stock-jobber in a white waistcoat, or into a homely, pock-marked, provincial bank manager.

One afternoon—it was a half holiday—we went for a walk in the direction of the rich sweet valley in whose slender stream I had patiently fished for minnows with bent pins and large worms. On the sea-facing borders of that valley was an old Roman fosse, and when we reached it we were liberated from the yokedom of twos and twos, and rushed about. Instead of joining in the sports of the others Rawdon and I sat down. I was about ten and he was perhaps eleven.

He had said to me, "I want to talk to you when we get to the fosse," and being unlinked we threw ourselves down in a quiet place. The time was about a fortnight after the midsummer holidays. The grass which covered that classic memorial sparkled in vivid sweeps of green dye. Skulls had been picked up in the place, and ancient weapons, and a scalp with a woman's long yellow hair adhering, had been unearthed. Bouville museum held many such curiosities, but none equaled in interest those fair and ever lustrous tresses. The dreamer shapes a sweet face for them as he muses. The boys were shouting and running in all directions. The masters sat together in a group conversing. On the central mound, clean cut against the sky, which was streaming swiftly in small, white clouds, four or five goats were standing, staring down on the sporting lads. A few boys rushed up the acclivity to the assault. A big, old goat, with a long white beard, the grandfather of that family, poised his horns dangerously. But there is nothing French that can withstand English courage; roast beef and bitter beer must everywhere prevail! The old grandfather thought to himself: "They have galled me before with stones, they may gall me again," and in a twinkle of tail, and contemptuous toss of horn, rounded and vanished with his family swifter than the shadow of the cloud that followed. Such was the picture as I preserve it.

"Did you ever hear of eider-duck shooting?" said Rawdon.

"No," I answered.

"Some people were talking about it when I was at home, and afterwards I read about it, and I tell you what; you can go to Norway and shoot eider-ducks, and make a fortune in a few months. The feathers of the birds are worth their weight in gold."

"Are they good to eat?"

"Nobody shoots eider-ducks with that idea," said he. "All that's wanted is a gun, and there you are."

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He looked hard at me with his fine eyes and charming, frank, young face, for, as I have elsewhere said, he was the prettiest boy that mother ever hugged.

"If you'll run away I will, and we'll go shooting eider-ducks," said he.

This was a tremendous proposal to spring upon me who had been utterly unsuspecting of what was in his mind ; moreover, he had mentioned Norway as the home of the eider-duck, and the notion of the country as regards distance was like looking up into the sky. I cannot recollect, however, that I was in the smallest degree frightened or astonished. On the contrary I was most viciously acquiescent. The scheme of running away, to begin with, was splendid, and surely no conception of Paradise could rival in a boy's mind the fancy of wandering over Norway with a gun shooting eider-duck.

"I'll run away with you," said I, "but have you got a gun?"

"No."

"We can't run away without a gun," said I.

"You can find out what it would cost to buy a gun here," he exclaimed. "I've got ten francs. What money have you?"

"I can get some money from my mother," I answered. "What a jolly idea! When shall we start?"

"We mustn't be caught," said Rawdon. "We will creep out of bed when everybody is asleep, and take our clothes and shoes in our hands, and dress ourselves downstairs. Then we'll squeeze out through the hedge, and walk to the harbor and go on board the ship that is sailing for England."

I was in raptures—grinning at him like an ape all the time he was talking.

"Hull is the place we start from when we get to England," continued Rawdon. "They go straight from Hull to Norway."

We conversed in this fashion. We talked the matter over again and again ; we discoursed in the same words, for we had few ideas. All that was needed was a gun—and there we were ! Those who forgot their boyhood may doubt this. But I who relate it, acted it, and will swear to it. That our gun when purchased would require ammunition we never either of us once considered. Nor did we trouble to reflect that even if we should succeed in getting to England by concealing ourselves in a collier bound to that country, she might land us in a place which would be very remote indeed from Hull, and Hull having been spoken of, we could think of nothing *but* Hull.

We did not reflect upon the need of money as a condition of these little excursions, because I was ten and he was eleven. A gun—and there we were ! Only buy a gun, and within a week, according to Rawdon's calculation, there would be an unprecedented slaughter of eider-ducks in Norway.

Some weeks elapsed before he could carry out our plot to run away, and every Sunday when I went home I devoted the afternoon to walking the streets in search of a shop that might by some accident contain a gun. In Bouville there were old rag and bag shops that gaped shutterless through the Sabbath as through the rest of the week. It happened one Sunday that being on my usual quest of a gun I went down a street at the back of the harbor, a coarse, dusky, unpaved street of nodding gable ends, which bowed to the weight of the masses of black-red nets which the fishermen hauled aloft. This was the very last street in which I should have hoped to find a gun, and here it was, five doors down on the right after I had entered the street, its barrel supported by a pair of trousers invitingly hung up.

The shop window was garnished by a great many curiosities : a model smack, a model Dutch East Indiaman, antlers, spears, and shield, and other such wonders, but I

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could see nothing but the gun. It was probably the craziest old piece ever exposed for sale, and I thought it the most beautiful specimen of its sort, and panted at it.

A man without a hat, his black head cropped as close as a convict's, his face very shaggy and piratical, with beard and mustache, stood in the doorway of this shop sucking a pipe with the barrel inverted close under his nose. He held me very steadily in the corner of his eyes but said nothing, choosing that desire should increase by gazing. I looked at him, and he grinned.

"How much is that gun?" I asked.

"It's a beauty," he answered. "It will bring down a lark at three hundred yards. Best of all, it makes a glorious explosion when it goes off. Would you like to hold it in your hand?"

"I would, very much," I answered, scarce realizing but that I was in a dream.

He asked me to step into his shop, and I followed him into a dark atmosphere filled with a hundred strange and bewildering smells, and, as I at first supposed, with the figures of men hung up by the neck, but I presently discovered that they were suits of clothes and oilskins.

Models of smacks were also suspended under the ceiling. These models used to be purchased in gratitude by the smacksman who had narrowly come off with his life, and hung up as votive offerings to the Virgin in a little church named after her Son on the heights.

I saw in this shop a sight I never shall again see. When I first looked I believed it was some questionable shape of god or goddess brought from the far east. It was the oldest woman probably then alive. Some declared that she was a hundred and thirty when she died. Time had squeezed her face into a single expression of nose; all her features had "run"; you thought of the bill of a bird when you saw her. She nodded constantly, but otherwise

sat motionless in a curiously carved black armchair near a door at the back.

The man got into his window and brought out the gun, which he cocked, and snapped, and took imaginary aims with, and slapped and made much of, until I was in a fever of excitement. The closer I got to that gun the more beautiful I thought it. He put it into my hand, and told me to clap it to my shoulder and take aim like a man, whereupon unconsciously I leveled it at the old woman, who uttered a strange, greasy cry, and struggled to get up. The man swept the barrel away from her, and bade me take aim at a pair of sea-boots. He was so good as to produce two or three caps, and he showed me how to put them on the nipple. I exploded them, and felt, then, ripe for deeds of greatness.

"Will you buy this splendid gun?" said the man.

"How much is it?" I asked.

"How much money have you got?" he inquired.

"None."

"I do not sell to boys who have no money," said he coldly, making to put the gun away.

"I can get ten francs," I cried, viewing his behavior with a spasm of despair. "And my mother will give me more."

"Then it is settled," he exclaimed. "Bring fifteen francs to this shop, and the gun is yours."

I returned to school as usual that night and told Rawdon that I had handled and seen a gun, and that it would be mine when I took the money to the man. He made me give him the most minute particulars of this gun, and of the strange bagman's shop, with its models and its horrible, wonderful old woman, and he then grew indescribably excited. Indeed long after we went to bed, and when many of the boys were snoring, Rawdon and I lay awake talking about that gun. We could think of nothing else, and when I fell asleep I dreamed that I aimed the piece at the old woman and shot her head off,

Rawdon gave me ten francs which I put into my waist-coat pocket, meaning to ask my mother to give me five francs when I went home next Sunday. But, though incredible as it may seem, we neither of us thought of the need of ammunition for this gun, nor of money in order to get to Norway, nor of the clothes we might require ; one difficulty presented itself in anticipation and was understood. It was this : when I had bought the gun, what was I to do with it ? I could not lay it upon my shoulder and march home like a private in the army. The first policeman I met would collar me. It was not likely that my father and mother would allow me to keep the gun. I could not sneak it into the house darkly and mysteriously ; it was always daylight for me, and when the welcome dusk came in which I might have made shift to smuggle the fowling-piece to my bedroom, I was obliged to return to school.

Rawdon and I debated this matter with the utmost gravity and anxiety. We talked of it at night and in play-hours, and I wonder that the master did not guess that we were two young conspirators hatching a plot, and in a condition to be carefully watched.

Unfortunately we had no ideas on the subject of concealing the gun, and of course we durst not go for advice to older boys. At last on the Saturday before the memorable Sunday on which I bought the gun, Rawdon called to me who was swinging, and said, "I'll tell you how it's to be done. Ask the man to wrap it up, barrel and all, in brown paper. Nobody will then guess what you are carrying, and then you can pass here when we're at church in the evening, and hide the gun in the hedge beyond the wall."

This seemed to me a very fine idea, and easy to carry out. The boys would be at church between six and seven. Cheshire officiated, Dodson was always in his place at church. All the masters were there to help the singing.

The gloomy road fronting the wall and hedge of the school would, as I well knew, of a Sunday night be empty and silent, and I should have plenty of time to thrust the gun into the hedge unperceived.

I went home as usual after church on Sunday, and my father noticed that I was quiet and abstracted at dinner, and asked me if I had been getting into any mischief. I answered, no, but that I was sick of school, and now knew all that they had to teach.

"I speak better French than the French master," said I; "and better English than Mr. O'Connor. Besides, what's the good of book-learning at sea?"

"You cannot be a gentleman without education," said my mother, "whatever your calling is."

However, my talking in this way made them think that my dull manner was caused by my being sick of school and by my desire to go to sea. After dinner I followed my mother into the drawing-room, and asked her to give me five francs.

"Five francs?" she exclaimed. "What do you want so much money for? You are allowed a franc a week pocket-money, which is very handsome. Five francs?" she repeated. "Indeed, then, I haven't got it to give you, even if I thought it right that a young boy should have so much money."

I had never dreamt of her refusing me, and understanding that our scheme would be entirely knocked on the head if I could not collect fifteen francs to take down to the bagman, I began to whine, plead, entreat—indeed, I wept. My earnestness astonished her. Nevertheless, half a franc was all she gave me, and she told me not to let my father know that she had given me even that, as he considered a franc a week pocket allowance too liberal for a lad who had no wants beyond sweets.

I went to my bedroom and sat down upon my little bed. I was degraded, mortified, humiliated, in a great rage. I

would make my mother suffer for this. I would drown myself, and then she would be sorry that she had not given me five francs to keep me alive. I pulled out Rawdon's ten franc piece, and looked at it woefully, and asked myself what I was to do. Would the man take ten francs and a half for his gun, and leave me to pay the rest out of my pocket money? I feared that if he complied it would be on the condition of retaining possession of the gun till the money was paid, which would not suit us by any means, as our intention was to set out for Norway on the first good chance that came along at night after that gun had become ours.

Something put it into my head to ask if I had anything I could sell. The man might allow for it, and hand me over the gun. Alas! I had nothing except my boat, and I could not carry that through the town on Sunday. I looked at my boots and trousers. But the idea of selling my clothes only rendered my mind more hopeless and the problem more intricate.

All of a sudden, by some inspiration of my bad angel, I recollected that I was the owner of a silver spoon and fork presented to me by my godfather, who had died shortly after. The spoon and fork were kept in their case in a drawer in the sideboard, and when I lived at home they were sometimes placed for me. Now were they mine to sell? Here was an exquisite point of conscience, much too nice for the brains of a small boy to deal with. I said to myself—"They're mine. They were given to me," because I wanted them. But inwardly, through some secret voice of truth, I seemed to understand that my father and mother had a prescriptive right to the things, and that I should be acting like a thief in selling them without their consent.

My conscience worked in throes. I wanted the gun very badly indeed. I reasoned that the spoon and fork were a present to me, and that I could not steal from myself.

Moreover, the value of the feathers we should send home would be worth hundreds of silver spoons and forks.

To cut this part short, I looked out of the window and saw my father and mother walking in the garden. I then went softly downstairs on my toes like a ballet-girl, entered the parlor, and trembling with the meanness of the thing, opened the drawer, put the spoon and fork into my pocket, and ran out of the house.

When I entered the street in which the curiosity shop stood, I saw that the gun was still on sale. It leaned invitingly towards me; the trousers which had lovingly upheld it last Sunday had probably been sold and gone to sea. The shop door was shut; I rang a little bell, but not without alarm for I dreaded the idea of meeting the frightful old woman whose head I had blown away in a dream. I had conceived that she always sat in that shop, in the same place, day and night, nodding, and I feared her nods.

In a minute a window was opened overhead, and the owner of the shop looked out, but seeing me he cried: "Stop! I will let you in." He came to the shop door, and I looked hard through the gloom in the direction of the old woman, but though her chair was there she was not in it.

"Have you brought the money?" said the man, shutting the door.

"I have brought you ten francs and a half, and these," I answered, pulling out my godfather's gift. "They are real silver, and very valuable."

He took them carelessly in his hand, seemed to weigh them, and said; "Where is the money?"

I gave him the ten francs and a half, and he exclaimed: "Very well. I am satisfied. You shall have the gun." And he got into the window and brought out the weapon.

My heart beat very fast. I could not realize that I was the possessor of a real gun. Whilst I examined the murderous old piece the man looked at the spoon and fork. He suddenly said: "Are these yours?"

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"Yes," I answered, coloring furiously.

"Who gave them to you?"

"My godfather," I replied.

"That being so, the gun is yours," said the man, and he went behind the counter and put the spoon and fork into a drawer.

"I can't carry this home like this on Sunday," said I.

"Will you wrap it up for me in brown paper?"

"Even then it will make a parcel which will cause people to look at you. Observe me now, so that you shall be able to put the piece together when you require it." He went into his back room, and all the time that he was gone I was afraid the old woman would come in and sit down and nod at me. He could not discover the screw-driver he wanted, and I heard him swearing. At last he appeared with the tool and unscrewed the barrel from the stock.

"Put these screws in your pocket," said he, and he packed the disjointed piece very neatly into a short parcel, so that nobody could have guessed I carried a gun.

It was about a quarter past three, and I knew it. Also that the boys did not go to church until six, so that I should have to hang about for nearly three hours with this gun before daring to approach the precincts of the school. My dread of the old woman was too profound to suffer me to ask the man's permission to remain in his shop, otherwise I could have spent a very agreeable afternoon in examining the models and viewing the strange collection of objects which this bagman, who looked as if he had been a galley convict, had filled his dusky shop with.

I went out and was much stared at by two or three fishermen who were standing opposite. They probably knew the character of the owner of the shop better than I, and wondered what sort of parcel a young English gentleman should be carrying out of a second-hand shop on a Sunday afternoon. I hung about in back places,

and the gun grew heavier and heavier. I was afraid of being met and questioned by people I knew, and struck into the low quarters of the town where the English residents are never to be seen. Here finding a bench I sat down. A number of women talked in the doorways of their little houses. They wore the flapping caps and colored garments of the French fishwife; the men rattled over the stones in wooden shoes, and one or two looked hard at me, perhaps more sinisterly than I might have suspected. Nobody troubled me, however, and when it was a quarter to six I leisurely walked in the direction of the school. It was after six when I came abreast of the hedge. I looked carefully up the road and then down the road; not a living creature was in sight; indeed this was a very dull part of the town, and on Sunday all who lived hereabouts went to meet their friends in gayer places.

I knelt, and with all my strength thrust the package into the close-knit hedge. By luck I pushed it into a hollow and it fell out of sight. But it was to be easily recovered. I walked up and down in front of that length of hedge several times to make sure that nothing of the parcel was visible, and then with light arms and a light heart I ran home.

My mother asked me where I had been, and why I had not returned in time for tea. I told her that I preferred looking at the boats in an old curiosity shop to drinking tea. "We never see boats like that at school," said I. I have often gratified myself with the reflection that in my answer to my mother's question I tried hard to speak the truth. Short of confessing I could not be exact. But in saying I preferred to look at the models to drinking tea, I certainly spoke the truth, and my solemn and most earnest injunction to any boy whose eyes should chance to light upon this page is—tell the truth, be fearless, reflect, and speak the truth. For the truth is the basis of all the virtues,

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and a boy who loves the truth, and will not stoop to a falsehood, is armed with a power which will enable him to resist temptation, for he knows that if he sins he will confess it, and the obligation of confessing will preserve him from sinning. Speak the truth then, my boy, for a truthful boy is a charming and delightful character, and he is sure to make an engaging and fascinating man, the more so as he will become rarer and yet rarer, for the lie increases and the country is overrun by the liar. Speak the truth, boys ; don't be afraid of it, for truth is an angel of God ; if you love her she will stand beside you, she will fight your good fights, she will make you a delight to the heart of man !

CHAPTER VII.

WE RUN AWAY.

THE night on which Rawdon and I decided to run away was quiet, moonless, and dark ; but as the lofty windows stared unblinded upon the grounds, the mystic light of the heaven of night filled the room, and we did not need to grope.

It was about eleven o'clock ; constantly Rawdon had kept on saying, "Are you asleep ?" and as constantly I had asked him the same question. He was calmer than I, perhaps because he was a year older. The desperate spirit of this adventure poured in my blood in fire, my bed was wet with sweat, and I lay in a fever. We heard the clock of the adjacent church strike eleven, and when the last melancholy chime had trembled out of the air Rawdon said to me in a whisper,

"Shall we be off ?"

"Yes," I answered.

The big dormitory was by no means hushed : all sorts of gasps, and snorts, and whines, and moans in a treble, like the voices of lamenting girls, broke from the rows of beds. Here and there you could see a quilt tossed in quivering pallor by some restless knees, but it was not hard to tell that the bedroom of boys slept.

We got out of bed, took our clothes, shoes, and stockings in our hands, and on fearful legs, looking backward as we glided, we slipped to the door, which stood ajar for the ventilation of the large apartment. On passing through this door we arrived at a wide old monastic land-

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ing with windows through which fell the sheen of the night upon the yawning staircase.

"How cold it is!" said I; and my teeth began to chatter.

"Look!" whispered Rawdon. "The house door is open—wide open! and—oh, goodness! what is that coming upstairs?"

We shrunk in terror against the wall. A figure in white was rising slowly upon the steps of that staircase. I often wonder that we did not howl out and rush back to our beds with the velocity of the wind, abandoning then and there our scheme of making our fortune by eider-duck shooting in Norway forever and forever.

The figure was no ghost, but a boy in his night-shirt; he passed us close, I do not think I could have recognized him, but Rawdon said, "It is Trotter; he is walking in his sleep."

Trotter slept in another dormitory; he had clearly made his way downstairs, opened the hall door, walked in the grounds, and was now returning, mistaking the staircase that led to his own room. Of course I knew Trotter well. He was a suet-faced boy, with large, foolish, staring eyes, thin limbs, and a round pot of belly. It was said of him that he talked in his sleep, that he sat up in his bed and held alarming arguments with visionary people, until the blow of a pillow brought him to his senses, or some friendly hand dragged him jabbering in his sleep on to the floor, where he was kicked and pounded, with repeated invitation to consider the feelings of others.

"I hope he won't wake up a boy by trying to get into bed with him," said Rawdon, who did not seem very frightened.

My fear, on the other hand, was so great that I am surprised my shuddering legs supported me; that I did not fall head over heels downstairs. We were in our night-shirts, as Trotter was, for the matter of that, and the house

door was open, and all the wind of the night was coming up that wide staircase in a draught which turned me into goose-flesh, and kept my under jaw hammering the upper till I was almost deaf with the chattering of my teeth. The dreadful specter of Trotter, fearfully pale, and so exactly like a ghost that no midnight grave ever yawned forth a figure more appalling, glided towards the door of the bedroom and disappeared.

"Come along," said Rawdon, whose heart was much stouter than mine.

We went downstairs, and, standing behind the open door, dressed ourselves.

"I hope old Dodson won't see us crossing the garden," said Rawdon. "We shall be flogged and expelled if we are caught."

My chattering teeth forbade a reply. Indeed, perhaps I secretly wished that Mr. Dodson *would* see and catch us, and so put an end to an adventure whose earliest alarms had been almost beyond my spirit to support.

We had taken care to smuggle our caps to the bedroom, and being dressed, we sallied forth on the same fearful legs with which we had quitted the room, wildly gazing round us and crouching as we went. The crossing of that garden was no mean ordeal to my nerves. The tall and visionary shapes of the trees watched us : the breeze in their branches seemed to whisper about us : but the most dreadful part was the apprehension of the shadows of the monks who formerly occupied the building, and who, though the last of them had become ghosts over a century and a half since, had been seen by certain unhealthy boys to stalk in meditative posture under the trees at midnight.

How were we to get out ? We had provided for that. The hedge was a good thick growth and middling high, but against the wall it was a little broken away, and there was plenty of room for a boy to creep through. I went first, and got into the road with a scratch or two : some,

thing hooked Rawdon and he yelped, believing it a hand. He struggled with all his might, and emerged with a piece of the hedge at his heels.

"Now let's get the gun," said he, "before we're missed."

I had taken the bearings of that fowling-piece, but was obliged to dive for it, and when I handed it to Rawdon my hands and face tingled with scratches as though I'd been set upon by a hundred wild cats. But the package was safe under Rawdon's arm, and off we started at a boy's trot in the direction of the harbor.

"Isn't it jolly?" said Rawdon, scarcely speaking as if he meant it.

"I wish it wasn't so cold," said I.

"What ship shall we find, I wonder?" he exclaimed.

This was to be a matter of chance. Indeed Wordsworth's idiot boy did not act more inbecilely than we did. We had indeed a gun, but no powder, no shot, not a far-thing to buy any with, no money for food; none to pay our passage, and we had to find a ship which would take us.

We trotted through the deserted streets like limping young tramps. I did not know the old town by night. There was nothing familiar to me in somber, silent buildings which I had always hitherto beheld clad in daylight, with the life and color of people passing them on the pavements.

When we arrived at the corner of the street that leads to the harbor we saw a policeman standing under a lamp that dangled over a rounded shop door. I wanted to cross. Rawdon said:

"No. He may call to us and ask us questions."

It happened all the same, however, that when we approached him he stopped us.

"What boys are you?" said he, looking very fierce with his pointed mustache and imperial.

"You talk French best," said Rawdon. "Answer him."

I was very frightened, and though he would lock us up in prison. I answered: "We are two English boys."

"Have you no home that you're out out in the street so late at night?"

"We are going to England," said I. "A ship that sails early in the morning will take us across to our country."

This I ventured, for I could not know but that a ship *did* sail early in the morning.

All the time I was in a great fright, and shudders ran through me, and Rawdon afterwards owned that throughout this passage he trembled exceedingly. The policeman wore a sword and white metal buttons which sparkled in the light.

"Is that your luggage?" said he, laying hold of the parcel which Rawdon carried.

"Yes," answered Rawdon.

He weighed it, and felt it, and exclaimed: "What is in this package?"

"A gun," I replied.

There was no occasion for him to open the parcel to verify this statement. He could easily feel the stock and the barrel of the piece through the paper.

"Two boys going to England with no luggage but a gun," he muttered, handing the parcel to Rawdon. "It is curious. Where have you been stopping at Bouville?"

I named my father.

"And your friends let two young boys go on board ship for England all alone in the middle of the night."

He shrugged his shoulders, and the gesture was profound with suspicion. We were making off.

"Stop!" he cried.

I thought we were lost. Just then a man came out of a house a few doors up the street. It was a shop kept by an

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English pastrycook, and I had noticed lights burning in the upper windows, just as here and there you saw a window lighted up ; in one house a woman singing, in another house much laughter and a sound of romping. The man approached us with a deep sea roll, whistling "Hearts of Oak." When he was close he stopped, and said in a jovial note in English :

"Middling late for them boys to be out of their beds, ain't it, Mr. Policeman ?"

The policeman shook his head, signifying that he did not understand.

"We are English, and want to go to England," said Rawdon ; "and this man is trying to stop us."

"*He* can't stop you," said the man. "But what vessel are you going in ?"

"That's what we mean to find out, if he'll let us pass on," answered Rawdon.

"A runaway job, is it ?" said the man in a hoarse, mysterious whisper, not wanting, however, in a comforting accent of joviality and sympathy. "School a tight fit ? Where d'ye live in England ?"

"At Guildford, in Surrey."

To all this the policeman stood listening with a deaf face.

"What is your name ?"

"Charlie Rawdon."

"And yourn, my hearty ?"

"Walter Longmore, sir."

"You two come along with me," he said. "I'm not a man to leave my fellow-countrymen in distress abroad. No man could ever bring that charge agin Tommy Dodd. Tell Parley-voe there that I'm mate of the *Rebecca*, and you're going to sail along with me."

I translated this, seemingly to the admiration of Mr. Dodd, who then said to the policeman : "It's all right, d'ye see. These here boys are Angleesh. I am Amgleesh."

Bong swore," and catching hold of each of us by the arm, the "heart of oak" dragged us forward, rolling between, and the policeman never said another word.

"He'd have stopped you," said Mr. Dodd, whom we were then too young to recognize as slightly but quite harmlessly disguised in several parting cups of liquor. "D'ye know that tuck-shop you saw me come out of? Gorged yourself stiff there, I lay, time out of mind. It's owned by my brother-in-law. That there policeman would have stopped you, and clapped you in a dark hole till the morning. But Tommy Dodd's not a man to leave his countrymen in distress abroad, and if you're running home from school who's to blame you? Didn't I run away from school, and hide myself aboard a brig that lay on the mud? Is it a French school you're running from?"

"No, an English school," answered Rawdon, to whom as to me this man's companionship and conversation were marvelously seasonable and delightful.

"Is that your luggage?" said Mr. Dodd.

Rawdon answered boldly that it was a gun. Dodd stopped dead, and I was afraid that he was going to leave us in the lurch.

"Here, let's have hold!" said he, and Rawdon gave him the parcel. He had no more need than the policeman to open it to judge its contents.

"Strike me soft!" cried he, "what a yarn! Two boys running away with a gun, or is it a gun that's running away with two boys? What are you going to shoot? What's your game—schoolmasters?"

Here he sent forth such a roar of laughter that the sleeping houses were startled into echoes, and it was strange that people did not throw up their windows and look out. He caught each of us by the arm again, and swayed us onwards, crying: "But what do you want with a gun? What do you want with a gun?" and filling the street with laughter.

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Rawdon answered : " It was ours, and we did not choose to leave it behind us."

" Well, smite me soft, if it ain't a yarn too ! " said Mr. Dodd. " But it never was said, and it never shall be said, that Tommy Dodd forsook distressed countrymen of his abroad when he could have helped them. I dare say yer han't got much money ? "

" We haven't got any," I answered.

" There it is ! " said Mr. Dodd. " If your case ain't one of distress, whose is ? "

We arrived in the harbor, a black cold scene of night, with a frosty breath of the sea in the air, and moan of breakers coming across the sands and from the pier end where white water was always playing. The tide was low and the vessels lay deep under the wall. A few spots of windy light went along the quay, and there were more lamps on the pavement opposite, and about the custom-house. I saw the dusky figure of a *douanier* walking along the edge of the wall, and Mr. Dodd said : " That chap would have questioned and stopped you if I hadn't been with you."

A clock struck a quarter to twelve, and many clocks in the town took up the chimes, and the quiet seemed filled with swinging bells. Little more was visible of the shipping and harbor than dim tracings and cross lines which motionlessly struck out the stars, proving that the hulls were steady and aground.

We came to a vessel lying abreast of the custom-house. I afterwards discovered that she was a brig. Mr. Dodd, putting his hand on an end of ladder, said : " Can yer crawl down these 'ere steps without stumbling overboard ? "

" Yes," I answered.

" Not with this gun," said Rawdon.

" Here, give me hold," said Mr. Dodd, and with another great ear-splitting laugh he flung the parcel on to the deck, and it fell with a bursting smash.

"Nothing's going to hurt that there gun of yours," said Mr. Dodd. "Come along now."

He put his foot over and descended. I followed, and last came Rawdon. By clinging hard and feeling carefully with our feet, helped too with the knowledge that the burly figure of Mr. Dodd was immediately under us to catch us if we slipped, we managed to arrive in safety at a plank that lay between the steps and the brig's bulwark rail. I caught hold of Mr. Dodd, and Rawdon caught hold of me, and thus linked we made the passage of that plank and gained the deck.

A raw smell of salt black weed, and tar and ooze rose strong, and albeit the brig was on the mud, a noise of running water as the tide made, was in the breeze. There was not a living creature visible on the decks of the brig. Whether the crew were ashore or asleep in their forecastle I do not know. Mr. Dodd picked up the parcel, which had not burst, and told us to follow him. He peered first through a small skylight into the cabin where a lamp was burning. We two boys could not believe that we were awake. Here was a real ship, sailing in the morning for England, and we should be off before sunrise to shoot eider-ducks in Norway! What would the other boys think if they heard of our adventure? What groans of envy would ascend if it was known how fortune had so far smoothed our path for us!

Mr. Dodd led us into the cabin by way of the little companion-hatch, and we found ourselves in the realms of romance; a real cabin in a real ship, a little table, a lighted lamp, a locker, little sleeping berths aft, an old stove at the foot of the steps, a bird-cage in the skylight, and glasses and cold water on a motionless swing-tray—everywhere a penetrating smell of coal. The like of such an interior was not wholly unknown to me, as you will remember, but it was entirely fresh to Rawdon's brief experience of life, and he gaped and stared.

Mr. Dodd's first step was to knock upon the door of one of the berths. He obtained no response, and opened the door and looked in, shut it, and came away, saying :

"I thought so. Capt'n still ashore." He then turned on the lamp which now shed a good strong light, and after examining us critically, he said :

"Sit down, boys, and I'll get you something to eat."

He made his way to a little cupboard forward and returned with a piece of cold fresh boiled beef, and the remains of a currant pudding. He found us knives, and forks, and plates, and gave us each a ship's biscuit ; next produced from a locker a bottle of rum, of which he mixed a small quantity for each of us in cold water, but he more than half filled his own glass with the liquor, and put very little water to it. Yet it did not seem to burn him when he swallowed it, after bestowing a nod upon each of us.

We were rather young to be eating boiled beef and ship's cold pudding, and drinking rum and water at midnight in a brig on the mud. He told us to help ourselves, and then leaned against the cabin wall, leisurely filling a pipe, whilst he watched us as though he admired us. His face was the best-humored of any man I ever met, cordial kindness shown in his eyes, and I should say, speaking after all these years, that he would have made you one of those shipmates and messmates whom a man recalls very often with much more affection than he recollects his brother. He was not tipsy but had taken enough. He had talked sensibly to us ; he told us that the brig was bound to Cowes, in the Isle of Wight, that as we had no money he would find a lodging for us in Cowes, and telegraph to our parents, which he thought would make it all right. This caused Rawdon and me to look rather blankly at each other, but the heavy glass of grog Mr. Dodd had recently swallowed had affected his sight, and he was no longer capable of observing closely.

The drop of rum he had given us was also affecting my

sight and Rawdon's. We yawned convulsively, and were indeed dog-tired. Seeing this, Mr. Dodd, who was not too far gone not to understand such howling noises as we delivered, with a rather boozed and mawkish smile, leaned against the bulkhead smoking his pipe, considering within himself. He then said :

"Yes, my lads, the traverse must be worked out by your using my berth. I'll sleep on the locker here. I am for doing everything to soothe the hardships of fellow-countrymen who are in distress abroad."

He lurched to his cabin door, and bade us pick up our gun and follow. We entered a little hole of a sleeping-room, with a window in the side, scarcely looking larger than a crown-piece. Under it was a bunk, and from this bunk ran a short locker, upon which Mr. Dodd spread a pea-jacket for a mattress and a pair of trousers for a pillow.

"You are the youngest, I guess," said he to me, "so jump into that bunk and go to sleep ; and you," he continued, turning to Rawdon, "adjust yourself upon this 'ere locker and go to sleep too as fast as you can."

He waited until I got into his bunk, and Rawdon had lain down upon the coat and trousers, holding the door open that we might see by the cabin lamp. He then wished us good-night, and shut the door upon us, and we were plunged into the blackness of the grave.

In that lap of darkness I instantly fell as sound asleep as though I had been dead indeed. I was awakened by a novel and peculiar motion. I imagined that some of the boys had got hold of my bed and were swinging me to and fro. The flash of day was upon the sea, and the splendor in needles of light pierced the little bull's eye and irradiated the cabin. The motion that disturbed me had awakened Rawdon. We sat up, staring about us in bewilderment, and Rawdon then said : "By Jove ! we're at sea !"

No need to go on deck to find *that* out. At every roll and lift the old bucket strained her timbers to the heart ; she was in ballast, light, like an empty cask. A pair of oilskin trousers wagged under a sou'-wester upon the bulkhead. I began to feel very sick.

"How far have we gone, I wonder?" said Rawdon.

"Oh, I shall be sick—I shall be sick!" I cried.

And sick I was. I might have believed my very soul was being torn out of me by the nauseating motions of that brig. Yet strange to say, my stomach was no sooner freed than I instantly felt better ; the nausea passed, nor did it recur. A little faintness lingered, and I lay back. Rawdon owned a silver watch, and discovered that it was seven o'clock. We heard the voices of men in the cabin, and presently the door was opened, and Mr. Dodd made a step with the splendor of the morning behind him burning out of the east through the skylight. He started and cried out :

"Strike me soft, if I hadn't forgotten them ! I shall have to report ye to the captain, lads. Whose longshore swash is that?"

"Mine, sir," said I, faint and frightened.

He put his head out and called to Bill to bring a swab and a bucket of cold water. And Bill in the person of a lumpish boy arrived, and made the cabin sweet. The lad was too loutish and thick-headed even to look at us.

"Can yer get up, sonny?" said Mr. Dodd to me.

I got out of his bunk, feeling very dizzy, and the swing of the deck obliged me to hold on tightly to what was next me. Mr. Dodd grasped me very tenderly by the arm and we went into the cabin. He told us to sit down on the locker at the table, and then knocked upon the door at the cabin next the berth we had occupied.

"Hullo!" echoed a deep, sea voice, and out stepped a stout, short man, in a rusty tall hat, in a rustier long coat buttoned to his throat, around which lay several coils of

chocolate-colored shawl. His short beard was gray, and he had a very hard and acid face.

"Hullo!" he repeated. "What are these boys a-doing of 'ere?"

"I forgot to report them, John, and I'll tell you how it happened," said the mate, who was as superior to the captain as the captain was to the loutish cabin-boy. He told the story, and wound up by saying that "Tommy Dodd was never known to leave his fellow-countrymen in distress abroad in the lurch if he could help it."

"Ay, that's all right," exclaimed the captain, "but these 'ere boys ain't no distressed countrymen. They're two lads ill-using of their parents by wickedly rooning from their school, and I'm not going to make myself accountable for them."

"It'll be all right," said Mr. Dodd.

"No it won't," answered the captain sternly. "I know the law. You are making me connive at an offense. Them youngsters must be transhipped to anything innards to Bouvull, or they shall be delivered up to the police at Cowes, and sent back as young wagabones. Where was you a-going to?" he asked.

"To Norway," I gasped out, affrighted by his face and manner into the admission.

"Do your friends live in Norway?" he inquired.

"No."

"Then what are ye going there for?"

"To shoot eider-ducks," I replied.

"Smite me soft then, if that ain't the reason for that there gun," shouted Mr. Dodd, instantly following the remark by an explosion of laughter, and he went into his berth and brought out our parcel and tore it open and exposed the contents—a sorry, a piteous show! I felt thoroughly degraded by that gun. Now that its barrel was off the stock it looked incredibly old and mean.

"Well, I'm juggered!" said Mr. Dodd. "But there's

English spirit in it too, John. Note that, mate. These 'ere are countrymen of ourn, and they were in distress, and I know my dooty," and his eye falling upon the gun he burst once more into one of his mighty laughs, and even the captain's hard face relaxed a little.

"Where's the rest of their luggage?" said he.

"That's all they've got," answered the mate.

"And what are ye going to do with eider-ducks?" inquired the captain.

"Sell their feathers," answered Rawdon.

"But ye can't shoot with a gun like that," said the mate.

"Here are the screws," I exclaimed, pulling them from my waistcoat pocket.

With an immense clasp-knife he put the piece together, whilst the captain said, "Got any money?"

We answered together, "No."

"Any powder and shot for that there gun?"

Again we answered together, "No."

"And you've got no clothes," continued the captain very grimly. "Why, of course, you must be retarned. I wouldn't be accountable for two such roonaway boys for the value of this brig."

Just then the lad that had swabbed up the cabin came in with some breakfast. It was savory cheer—split mackerel, kippered herrings, a dish of bacon, a jug of coffee, and a loaf of bread. I was unable to eat, and Mr. Dodd perceiving this said: "You come along on deck, sonny, and keep a lookout with me."

I followed him up the short companion steps, leaving Rawdon to sit and eat with the captain. And my spirits plucked up in a moment, and all the life and pulses of my boyhood swept and throbbed in me when I breathed the fresh air, and beheld the glory of the morning and the vastness of the ocean.

All on our right the water was like burnished metal; it

flamed in white fires and was magnificent. Thus sumptuously clad the swell came rolling to the brig in a stately nodding procession. The brig fell from side to side, sousing her channels in the quicksilver and lifting them sluicing. The dark sails beat thunder out of the masts, and the shrouds vibrated like fiddle-strings twanged. I could scarcely stand, and held on tight by the corner of Mr. Dodd's coat. A few grimy sailors lurked about the deck forward, and the smoke from the galley fire shook in a black plume betwixt the masts. I looked for England, but there was no sign of any other country than France, which stretched astern of us in a long line hovering off the sea at either extremity. Bouville had melted into its own hollow, but I thought I saw the flash of glass windows, and this made me think of home and my mother. Did I wonder if her heart was aching for me? Did I fear that, the news having reached her, she would be distracted with grief? No. No tender impulse visited me. Why? Because I was a thoughtless small boy, existing *then* only in that region of marvels, splendors, and perils which I would dream of when I lay on my back in the field and watched the tapestries of the sky.

Right ahead, toy-like in the unfathomable recess of airy splendor, was a vessel, and her canvas winked like the lantern of a lighthouse as she rolled. Afar on either hand sparkled a spire or two.

Mr. Dodd asked me how I liked being at sea, and I answered: "Very much."

He inquired if I would like to be a sailor, and I told him that I meant to be one.

"I don't like to give an opinion off-hand," said he; "but I do fear, sonny, you're not going to make much money in shooting eider-ducks in Norway with that there gun of yourn, even if you should get powder and shot to load it with."

"The feathers are very valuable," said I.

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"Those birds take a deal of shooting," he exclaimed. "Can you aim pretty straight?"

"I never tried," I answered. "I might have shot an old woman if the gun had been loaded," and here I fell a-laughing, which made him laugh too, and his jovial note was so contagious that it was returned in an echo of laughter from the men.

"Is that boy downstairs your brother?" said Mr. Dodd.

"No," I answered.

"Don't you live in Guildford with him then?" said he.

"No," I blurted out, "father lives in Bouville."

He stopped, and made me stop, and looked so sternly at me that I was terrified.

"Have you got a mother?" he inquired in a slow, lamentable voice.

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"And you're running away from her—you that I took to be a fellow-countryman in distress—running away from father and mother unbeknown to them."

"We are running away from school," I whined in a crying voice.

He continued to stare and frown at me. "I never should ha' lent you a hand had I known it," said he. "Does the other boy live in England, or is it a lie?"

"It's true," I cried. "He lives at Guildford."

"Well, well!" muttered Mr. Dodd, with his naturally happy expression of face coming to him and lighting his eyes with mirth. "To go and get married, and have a boy and educate him, only to be turned on as if you was a worm with no more heart or capability of suffering than the maggot in the sailor's biscuit! Oh, it's a bad beginning. You'd break your ma's heart for the sake of shooting eider-ducks in Norway with an old gun—and old it is, the first charge will bust it, and I wouldn't be you, if it's you who lets it off."

I hung my head, and wished that Rawdon was with me ; we might have taken council by exchanging glances, and he might have stopped the tide of penitence and remorse that was beginning to rise on my mind slowly like water on a shoal.

CHAPTER VIII.

VERY MUCH AT SEA.

PRESENTLY the captain came on deck accompanied by Rawdon. The captain with his tall weather-bronzed hat, rusty coat, and sour Shields face, made the brig look like a collier in a picture. He gave her the color, the life, the feature she wanted. Possibly he had buried his old Judy, or no doubt she would have been sitting in the sunshine in the companion-way, patching her good man's breeks, whilst he stepped the weather deck.

All this time the wind was slowly scanting, and the swell was flatting somewhat, but the rolling of the crazy old bucket was desperate. The sail right ahead wallowed like a wounded gull. At this rate, when should we reach Cowes? The captain spoke to Mr. Dodd, and Rawdon, grasping the skylight to steady himself, gaped about him. Mr. Dodd then saying: "This boy's had no breakfast. Come along with me," took me below, and put a piece of mackerel before me, and a slice of bread, and a little drop of sweetened coffee in a mug.

The air had freshened me, and though I was without appetite, I managed to make a small breakfast, during which Mr. Dodd admonished me as to my duty towards my parents. He told me that a boy never could have more than one mother, so that her feelings were not to be hurt on any account. It was perhaps different with fathers. Some fathers had no feelings, and were only good to be run away from. He spoke with great energy, and I fancy in talking of fathers he was thinking of the time when he was a boy.

We went on deck again after breakfast, and Rawdon and I sat down on the planks near the man who was steering by the long tiller and watched him. We had never been aboard a vessel under sail, and though the canvas of this brig was dark and ill-fitting, we found her beautiful, our vision transformed her, she was clothed with the freshness and the glory of the dream.

"Isn't this splendid?" said Rawdon.

But Mr. Dodd's words had raised certain misgivings. I was beginning to think that I had treated my mother wickedly, and was a bad boy. But I did not communicate my reflections to Rawdon. He told me that the captain had sourly laughed nearly all through breakfast at our scheme of shooting eider-ducks. "Thank God!" he kept on saying, "I've got no boys too roon away and trouble me!" This captain, urged by some grimy sense of humor, I suppose, went below and returned with our gun, which he placed by my side, and the men about the decks to whom our story had been repeated by the loutish boy, laughed consumedly, and so did Mr. Dodd and the turtle-shaped man at the tiller; but the captain walked the deck as if there was no joke in heaven, earth, or water.

A mackerel-dyed calm was spread upon the sea, and the swells went lifting through it in folds of liquid light. Rawdon wished that the land would disappear behind, so that it might seem as if we were a thousand miles away in the ocean. But there was to be no behind presently in Rawdon's sense of the word, for the brig lost steerage way and the swell slewed her, and when we saw that her bowsprit headed direct for the French coast, we felt convinced that the sour captain meant to play us an ugly trick and carry us back to Bouville. This apprehension, however, was removed by our observing that in time the bowsprit described a circle, and sometimes the land was to port, and sometimes it was to starboard, and there we lay wallowing, and the captain cursed.

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I had never before seen the roll of the sea so grease-smooth. Mr. Dodd stepped up to us and said : " You'll not be in Cowes to-night, my lads, unless it comes on to blow a hurricane, which I see no signs of. This is how they traveled to the continent afore they invented the paddle-wheel ; mustn't it have been jolly ? two days from Dover to Cally ! My eye ! provisions and water running short, and the master going out of his mind because the sailors had took the only boat and rowed ashore."

Here the sour captain called out : " It's them boys that's brought this calm ; I've got a good mind to chuck that goon overboard, and if a breeze don't spring up, smother me, Tom, if they shan't go after it ! I'll teach boys to roon away from school and pretend that they're distressed feller-countrymen, and by false pretenses smuggle themselves on honest English brigs, where they has to be kep' at the expense of hard-working sailor men."

" He's only a-jokin'," said Mr. Dodd in a low voice, pitying the misery that was depicted in our faces, and he took up the gun and aimed it at the coast of France, then looked at the piece and laughed almost unnaturally.

It remained calm, and the brig continued to wallow and flap, and the captain often cursed his soul in oaths. Before the morning wore away Rawdon and I agreed that if the seafaring life consisted of calms, it would on the whole be rather uneventful.

" I hope Mr. Dodd won't telegraph to my father from Cowes," said Rawdon. " It will be very awkward for me if he does."

" The captain means to send us both back by the police," said I.

He looked at the fowling-piece that lay on the deck and said : " It will be of no use without powder and shot. I never thought of that. I shall give up the idea of eider-duck shooting." He said this very firmly. " There's money to be made in other ways ; and besides I mean to go to sea."

These sentiments were entirely in harmony with my own views, and the ridicule of the captain, mate, and men had taught me to loathe and detest the gun as sincerely as I had once admired it.

At half-past twelve it was still calm, and nothing in sight upon the long burnished heave but the brigantine that was sometimes ahead and sometimes astern; the coast of France loomed dull in a warm blue haze. At this hour the boy came aft with a dish of corned pork, greens, and a suet pudding that was like the boy's face, and the captain, who was not a little irritated by the want of wind, gruffly invited us down to partake of the brig's rude cheer. He did not make us very welcome, nevertheless. After he had helped us, he sternly asked if we thought it was right and proper that the master of a small collier, a poor man, should be at the cost of maintaining "two roon-away" boys.

"My father will pay you any charge you make," said Rawdon, haughtily. "He is rich. He lives in his own house."

"And my father will pay too," said I, plucking up and piping out with a note of defiance, for I thought he must be a very mean and sordid sailor to grumble over the cost of the humble meal to which he had invited us.

"I don't want no cheek from either of you," said he, loading his plate with pork, greens, and suet pudding, which he almost concealed with pepper. "Get on with your dinner, and then go on deck."

Once he was good enough to say: "Doo's you like your groob?" And we instantly answered together, out of politeness, "Very much, sir."

"Make a canny meal then," said he. "What doo's na' fatten fills."

In the afternoon a few shadows and feathers of catspaw combined in a small sun-bright wind out of the southwest and tickled the sea into a universal smile of ripples. Notes

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of the liquid harp-strings rose from alongside ; the yards were trimmed and the dingy sails floated out in silence. A few ships had sprung into sight to right and left, but the nearest vessel was the little brigantine now almost right ahead again, and when the captain came on deck and saw her, we boys heard him say to the mate, before he went below to get his dinner :

“ She’s evidently heading for Bouv’l, and, if so, I’ll send the boys aboard in the boat, if she’ll take ’em.”

The mate answered : “ She’s certainly bound to Bouville, and it’s best they should be returned to their friends as soon as possible, John,” and so saying he passed through the hatch.

It was dreadful to think of being returned to our friends, for we knew too well what that meant. But there was so much novelty in this scene of ocean breeze and meeting vessels, we were likewise so young, that our minds were incapable of fastening upon the immediate trouble of our being delivered up, perhaps that very evening, to Messrs. Dodson and Cheshire. The surly captain excited and distracted our attention by backing his main-topsail and hoisting the English ensign as a “ wift,” which I may explain is a flag whose middle part is “ stopped ” or tied up by a rope-yarn or piece of string, and sent aloft to waggle in the breeze as a token that help is wanted. Then there was the maneuvering of the approaching brigantine to observe. Our way was arrested, and she came close alongside of us, with her foretopsail backed, and I instantly recognized in the little man with his hands expanding his wide blue trousers, the master of the vessel the good priest had taken me aboard of in Bouville harbor, as you have read.

Mr. Dodd was now on deck. Our surly captain got upon the bulwark rail holding by a back-stay, and shouted : “ Brigantine ahoy ! Where are you bound to ? ”

“ Bouville,” came the answer from the little man in the wide trousers.

"We have two boys on board who have roon away from school at Bouville, along with a goon," shouted the captain; "will you be so good as to receive them, and 'and them up to their friends?"

This speech was utterly unintelligible to the little man. He shook his head, and shrugged his shoulders, and stared at his crew, who lay in a neat row of caps, and what might have served as night-caps, upon the rail, staring at *our* crew, who also lay in a neat row of dingy faces, gazing with the munching, bovine stolidity of the British merchant sailor at the Frenchmen. It was clear that an interpreter was wanted.

"Here's your man," cried Mr. Dodd, and catching me under the armpits he lifted me on to the rail beside the captain, and there held me.

"Tell 'em in French what I've just said," exclaimed the captain.

I did so in a clear, shrill voice, which carried very well.

"Are you one of the runaways?" demanded the Frenchman.

I answered: "Yes. I know you; I was taken on board your ship at Bouville by a priest, and you climbed the mast with me, and the priest said I was sure to go to sea."

He flourished his hand, and exclaimed: "Yes, I will receive you. But what shall I get for the trouble I shall be put to?"

"What do 'e ask?" said the captain at my side.

I told him.

"Up now, my lad, and say," said the captain, "that he'll get all that he wants and more than he expects." And when this was translated, to the admiration of Mr. Dodd—for indeed I was very fluent, and no French boy ever had a better accent—no praise to me, who from my babyhood had been forced to talk French—the captain ordered the brig's boat to be got over. This was done, and

Mr. Dodd, laughing heartily, handed down the naked and forlorn gun to one of the men, who made a joke of it, slapped it (no gun was ever more slapped), took imaginary aim, till my loathing of the piece grew to a sort of despair, and I heartily wished the fool would fall overboard with it.

This pantomime was enacted in the boat whilst we stood in the gangway through which the boat had been launched, saying good-by to the captain and Mr. Dodd. The captain contrived to put on a more amiable face now that we were leaving him ; I believe I had suddenly excited his respect by my display of French. He said : "Don't you go and roon away again. D'ye hear ?"

"We'll not go duck-shooting," said Rawdon.

"Respect your parents whilst they lets you, and take all the advantage of the eddication they're a-giving to you, instead of rooning away from it. Hand 'em into the boat, Tommy."

"Stand by, below there," shouted out Mr. Dodd, who said he was very sorry our pleasant voyage had come to an end, but that, depend upon it, it was all for the best ; and he was very pleased, he was sure, to hear that we had given up the idea of duck-shooting—at all events, with that there gun. We were then handed into the boat and rowed aboard the brigantine.

The stream of memory often runs darkling under the arches of the mind, but no portion of that surface remains more brilliant and vivid than this picture of the meeting of the two little ships, and of our being rowed to the brigantine. The vessels curteseyed side by side, their way arrested by the trim of their canvas. They seemed to bow to each other ; there was coquetry in the French craft's motions, in the leaning of her heights, smiling with the ruddy sunshine ; and the English brig tumbled with uncouth airs and the graces of the Tyneside collier in her efforts after a courteous bearing. We do not ~~hear~~ what

ships say, but they talk, nevertheless, and their language is grander and sweeter than that of humanity, because the poetry and the spirit and the wild and mighty leagues of the freedom of the ocean enrich far beyond the vocabulary of man their silent syllables.

And again I recall my first sense of the magnitude of the deep as it came to me, an impulse, as I sat in that boat. The swell was small, but it looked huge as hills from our low gunwale. So low were we seated, that the coast of France was sunk out of sight, and the sun, fast westering, might easily have been dreamed by me to be setting over some vast Pacific solitude. We gained the side of the brigantine, and I was thrust up, and then Rawdon was thrust up, and the gun followed, and a rumble of laughter came from the brig's company when that gun was passed over the Frenchman's side.

The little captain in the flowing blue trousers shook my hand heartily, and said: "Of course, you are the young gentleman the good priest said would be a sailor. We are now at sea, and in that ship," said he, pointing to the brig that had trimmed sail and was beginning to labor onwards, "you could have become a sailor. Why, then, do you return to Bouville?"

"We don't want to return. They are sending us back," I answered.

"You are schoolboys, and have run away," said he, looking at me and then at Rawdon, and then at the gun which Rawdon held, and at which the Frenchman could not help smiling. And he then asked us the name of the school we belonged to, and put many inquiries with which I need not tease you, and gesticulated with much passion, and shouted. "He is a thief—he is a common pirate! I know him. 'Tis not worth fifty centimes!" when I told him in answer that I had paid fifteen francs for the gun, which he was cocking, examining, and looking at as though it had been fished up from the bottom of the sea, and

was a relic of some galley or carrack of the "spacious" times.

Meanwhile his crew had rounded in upon their topsail braces : the little brigantine reeled her rudder in foam, and drove a white cloud ahead of her. It was now blowing a pleasant breeze, the time I think about five o'clock. Even as we stood watching, the French coast stole into curves and colors, and once again I thought I saw the flash of window glass where Bouville lay. Our spirits were very low. When we ran away we never considered the penalty that must attend our capture. Rawdon had indeed spoken of a flogging and expulsion, but words even of terrific significance repose lightly upon the understanding of the young and vanish even as the foam-bubble in the brigantine's wake.

The vessel moved slowly through the sea, and the soft shadow of night was coming up out of the east, trailing a few bright stars in its skirts, before the flash of foam about the green piles of the pier grew visible, and then the red light on the pier-head began to burn. It had been settled that the master of the brigantine was himself to convey us back to school and see us safe there. *Safe there!* I had entreated the man in the name of the priest to let me go straight home to my mother and father, and they would make my excuses to the schoolmasters, and save me much unnecessary pain of body and humiliation of mind. To this he had shouted in answer with absolute ferocity : "What! You are to go home, and your little companion here is to be left to face the consequences of your dangerous adventure? No, young sir, I am quite satisfied it would be the wish of your good papa and mamma that I should see you safe in the keeping of the two excellent gentlemen to whose care they committed you."

How I hated the little beast then! How I abhorred his blue trousers, his snub nose, his gestures, his French fierceness—a "pinchbeck" quality! There was nothing

to be said or done, and I was too manly to cry. I was too young, however, to understand that the beggar's game was reward, and that he believed himself more secure in that by handing us over to Dobson and Cheshire, than by letting me run away home.

It was shortly after eight when we floated slowly into Bouville harbor. The lamps along the wharf pricked spots of fire in the still and greasy surface of that breast which was then a brimming tide. The *douaniers* looked down upon us as we glided to a berth, but none else seemed in the least interested by the vessel's arrival. The captain told us to go into the cabin and wait for him.

He said: "Carry your gun with you."

We had partaken of some tea with him shortly after five, and now when we had sat about ten minutes alone in the cabin the cook came below and gave us a little red wine and white biscuit and marmalade. He leaned against a stanchion to survey us, and said: "Do you consider that a good gun?"

Rawdon answered: "We have been cheated."

"You English boys," said the cook, "are not wanting in a certain sort of courage, but you lack the intelligence of French boys. Do you think two French boys would run away from school with that gun, and no powder and shot, and no money, and be meanly surrendered after a few hours by their own countrymen? They would be too clever, they would amply provide for and make good their adventure."

"French boys wouldn't have the courage to run away at all," exclaimed Rawdon.

"I hate French boys!" said I.

"Pah!" cried the cook, snapping his fingers; then with much malice he asked: "What treatment will you receive when the captain hands you over?"

Low as were our spirits, depressed in heart as we were by our misfortunes and the black prospects which lay be-

fore us, yet we both of us felt so much contempt for this cook that we declined to answer him. He left us, and we sat together talking over what was to happen. We were now fully of opinion that our scheme of shooting eider-ducks in Norway was poor, and ill-calculated to enrich us. And we had also learnt that our gun would have been of no use to us without powder and shot, and that, in order to make our venture successful, we needed money and clothes to start with. Thus had we benefited from the experience of a night and a day, but we considered the behavior of the captain of the *Rebecca* despicable in handing us over to the French brigantine, and we regarded the brigantine's master in the blue trousers as our deadly enemy, and a horrible French bully, who crowed very big and tall over two small English boys, though he would have run fast as the wind from the frown of such a man as Tommy Dodd.

At first there was much chanting of French sailors on deck, noises of ropes thrown down on the hollow plank, groans of exasperation from the edge of the wharf. For a Frenchman cannot take up his berth without making a greater row than you would hear in a town if the half of it were on fire. At last the little ship was silent, and we wondered how long we were to be kept waiting. Suspense was no mean agony, and we had this English characteristic that, anticipating the worst, we desired to meet and end it.

Shortly after nine the French captain put his head into the companion-way and sang out—

“Come up, my boys, and bring your gun with you.”

Rawdon said: “Let's leave it. I'm not going to take it to old Dodson's. If he sees it he'll hit harder.” So we left the gun. But the Frenchman, observing that our hands were empty, yelled, “Go and bring up your gun, young gentlemen.”

How sick I was of that fowling-piece! I wearily descended the steps and picked up the gun as if it had been

an adder. I did not swear in those days—perhaps not in these—but I was so exasperated by that gun, so hated and loathed it, so appreciated the consequences of being seen by Mr. Dodson in the company of it, that the choicest forecastle vocabulary would not have yielded me half the injurious terms my rage and sense of degradation made me want to heap upon it. We climbed the ladder and gained the wharf, and the gun followed us in charge of the French captain.

I was on the point of running away. I very well knew that I could out-distance the captain by three feet to his one, but dreaded his outcry, and his “Stop him! Stop him!” People might think me a little thief, and knock me down, and it would have been horrible to be snatched at and tripped by a policeman. The captain put the gun upon Rawdon’s shoulder, seized each of us by an arm, and off we marched.

“Courage!” said the wretch. “It is not far. I know the house well. ’Twas an ancient monastery.”

Although it was a fine night not very many people were about. Most of the shops were still open. We marched steadily on, and in the light streaming through the shop windows a passer-by would now and again stop to look at Rawdon, trudging with his gun like a young Crusoe in custody, and perhaps to take stock of the three of us. We wore collars outside our jackets, Eton fashion, had not washed ourselves for two days, had lain in dirty places, and though the *Rebecca* was empty of coal, a subtle quantity still lurked in the hold to add a shade even to the complexion of a colored man. We thoroughly looked the part we had played. Nothing in jackets that ever ran away from school wore such a wrecked, dirty, fruitless, runaway appearance as we two. Our collars were dark, our hands were black, our faces were like a dustman’s, and the gun went with us, making a rope-like shadow over Rawdon’s lean shadow in the shop lights on the pavement,

I kept a keen look-out for my father, meaning if I saw him to howl his name and break away. The captain walked rapidly, and it was some time before the hour of ten when seizing the chain hanging against the wall of the school, he set the hollow sepulchral bell in motion. How Rawdon felt I do not know; to this point I had kept up, but when I heard that bell waking the silence of the night, and breaking into moans amongst the tall and quiet trees, my poor little soul worked in me in pulses of agony, and I cried freely, but so silently, that the dirty-spirited devil who was giving us up did not know I wept. And for this small mercy I am thankful.

The little door contained in the great gate was opened rather cautiously by Ambroise; visitors were not very usual at that hour; he peered out, and instantly seeing how things stood, uttered a sinister gurgling "Aha! Enter!" and he held the gate wide open. As we passed through he saw the gun, started and muttered, "Loaded?"

The captain shook his head. Ambroise took us right to the house door of Mr. Dodson's residence. I remember that the gravel crunched very harshly under our feet as we tramped. I also remember that, happening to glance at Rawdon, in spite of my tears, I could have been as shrill in laughter as in any happy hour at the sight of his little figure stumping along with the gun on his shoulders. Ambroise pushed open the hall door and we entered. He left us in the hall and disappeared in Mr. Dodson's library, and I tasted the aroma of sherry in the air.

In a moment or two Mr. Dodson, tall, pink, long-skirted, stood in the doorway gazing at us with his pince-nez in his hand. I see him still by the pale oil flame of the hall-lamp; erect, cool, with a slightly satirical smile hovering upon his lips whilst he glanced from me to Rawdon.

"Is that gun loaded, may I ask?" he inquired.

"No, sir," answered the captain.

"To whom does it belong?"

"To these boys."

"Take it away, Ambroise."

The knock-kneed man removed the gun from Rawdon's shoulder, where it weighed more heavily than even the poor little chap's heart in his breast, but the fellow was too consumed with curiosity to remove himself, and he only seemed to go.

"Walk in, Rawdon and Longmore," said Mr. Dodson.

"Please walk in, sir. Where did you fall in with these boys?"

"At sea. They were transferred to my ship the brigantine *Marie Louise* of Bouville, by an English brig, the *Rebecca*, and I considered it my duty," continued the fawning rogue, "to bring them here without delay."

"I thank you," said Mr. Dodson, sitting down at his table on which a lamp brightly shone, under a green shade.

He dipped a pen in ink, and asked the captain his name and address. These were given with suggestive alacrity.

"I will communicate with the parents of these boys," said Mr. Dodson, "and you will doubtless hear from them. Good-evening."

He coolly took some writing-paper from a drawer and began a letter, never once glancing at us. The French captain did not seem quite satisfied. After a brief but steadfast contemplation of Mr. Dodson's face, however, he appeared to form a decisive opinion, and went away, first offering to shake us by the hand; but we backed from him with our hands clasped behind us, and made no sound when he said, "Good-night, young gentlemen."

We were left to stand, whilst Mr. Dodson wrote. With what dread and loathing did I view that ample, pink, cool clergyman, scratching away with a quill, pince-nez on nose, head a little on one side! When he had finished his letter he addressed it, rang the bell, and Ambroise appeared. He gave some directions in a low voice to the

man. I afterwards came to hear that his letter was a formal communication to my parents of my capture and return to school that night, and a request that I should not be sent for till the morning. We both of us wondered whether Mr. Dodson was keeping us standing preparatory to flogging us then and there. He was about to pull the bell a second time when his housekeeper, Miss Mitchell, came down-stairs into the hall and uttered a cry on catching sight of the gun, leaning in a corner.

"What is that? Who has brought that dangerous thing here?" she exclaimed, bustling in, her stout figure gleaming in some satin-like stuff, which fitted her ripeness with a tightness that was not very becoming in a housekeeper, whom one should think was ribbed by the proprieties and the discreet and judicious virtues, as her stays were ribbed with steel. She caught sight of us, stopped with a dramatic start, delivered a shriek, and cried: "And so they have come back? What a very wicked pair of boys to be sure! And how dirty!"

"They have not come back, they have been brought back," said Mr. Dodson, resuming his chair, and looking at us. "There is a difference between 'come' and 'brought.'"

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Mitchell. "But what is that gun out in the hall, sir?"

"It belongs to the boys," was the answer. "I shall feel obliged by your telling Mrs. Wilkinson to make ready the bedroom over the fencing-room immediately, for the accommodation of these youths. They can lie together."

"They will want to be washed, sir?"

"No;" said Mr. Dodson, sternly, "let them remain as they are."

CHAPTER IX.

I AM REMOVED.

MR. DODSON's indifference to our personal appearance alarmed us more than had he begun to bluster in a number of threats. He once caned a boy because he found a little dirt in one ear. He was very particular in the direction of soap, and obliged us to wash ourselves with what Johnson calls "Oriental scrupulosity." He would tell us that cleanliness is next to godliness, scarcely perhaps considering that what is meant is cleanliness of life. I never believed him when I heard him say this, because I had read at home about hermits who were very nasty in their habits, and filthy begging friars, who wandered about the land in greasy flannel bound round with old rope. I am still of opinion that the cleanliness of the tub is a virtue that ranks, not next to, but high above the godliness of people who never wash themselves.

Mr. Dodson removed his pince-nez to address us.

"You ran away from this school, last night. You took a gun with you. What idea was in your head?"

"We were going to shoot eider-ducks in Norway, sir," answered Rawdon.

"You are aware," said Mr. Dodson, without the slightest change of countenance, "that boys cannot perpetrate a greater outrage than to run away from school."

He spoke as though our experience of a night and a day had made young men of us. We returned no answer.

"Who bought that gun?"

"I did, sir," I replied.

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“Did you keep it at home?”

“We hid it in your hedge,” I said.

“What did you mean to do with the ducks when you had shot them?”

“Sell the feathers, sir,” replied Rawdon.

“In short, you meant to run away for good. Why did you not proceed to England?”

“Because the captain of the brig wouldn’t take us, sir,” answered Rawdon. “He said he wouldn’t be accountable for runaway boys, and handed us over to the Frenchman who brought us here.”

This was fearlessly and coherently delivered, but our crime was so great that even if we had had the years, we should not have had the heart for a defiant or heroic attitude.

He continued to put questions to us, with a minute curiosity that I was too young to understand the drift of. In about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes Mrs. Wilkinson appeared. She said that our room was ready.

“Take them across, Mrs. Wilkinson,” said Mr. Dodson, “and see them into bed. They are not to be washed, and they can sleep in their clothes with their boots off. This will be extending the romance of running away, by another night. Then remove the candle, lock the door, and bring the key to me.”

We followed the old woman across the grounds to the forlorn wing of cloisters. I do not charge Mr. Dodson with premeditated cruelty, but I say that his thoughtlessness came very near to brutality, in causing too trembling boys to be locked up for a night in the room in which Johnson had shot himself; which had never been occupied since, and which of course was believed to be haunted by his shade. Nor was Johnson’s the only ghost our young hearts feared; spirits of dead monks had been seen moving strangely in these cloisters, and some of the boys had watched a shadow walk, and stop, and wring its hands,

and then walk on again under the trees where the gloom lay very dense.

We scarcely understood that we were to occupy Johnson's room until we were following old Mrs. Wilkinson up an uncarpeted staircase. She had detained us to light a candle in the fencing-room below. When she opened the door of the bedroom Rawdon stopped, and said: "Are we to sleep here?"

"You heard what Mr. Dodson said," answered Mrs. Wilkinson, who looked haggish in the candle-light—in truth, she was between sixty and seventy years of age. "You have miscondacted yourselves very wickedly indeed, and it's right that wicked boys should be punished for the good of others. So get into bed as quick as you can, or I'll have to fetch Mr. Dodson."

We saw no hope for us, no mercy in her face. The bed was small, but so were we. And fear might make us willing to lie snug. The old woman told us to take off our boots, and to get into bed just as we were—collars and all.

Those were her orders, and she wasn't going to report anything but the execution of her duty.

So we pulled off our boots and got into bed, and the old woman waved the candle over us to catch a final view; it was like some infernal gesture of a witch, and it lent another horror to the room. And then, without saying good-night, she went out, locked the door, and we heard her creaking down the wooden staircase, and faintly crunching across the playground.

The room was very dark. The blind was down. We lay quite silent for some minutes, prepared to hear or see something, and were slightly comforted by the sound of a snore proceeding from one of the senior boys, who slept in an adjacent chamber. But we were two in a bed, locked up in a haunted room, fully dressed, saving our boots, and what dreadful scheme this extraordinary treatment por-

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tended, we could not imagine. At last Rawdon broke the silence, by asking, in a fearful whisper :

“Didn’t you see a light flicker in the window?”

“I wasn’t looking,” I answered. “Why have they locked us up in this room?”

“If I were you,” said Rawdon, “I’d get up, jump out of the window, squeeze through the hedge, and run home.”

But I knew that the window was too high for a jump, without risking my neck, or a limb, and besides my spirits were so low, what with darkness, superstition, apprehension of the morrow, that I had not the courage of a flea.

We ought to have been dog-tired after our adventures, but weariness must be strong to drug fear, and we lay long awake listening to the clock when it told the hour, hearkening for a sound that should whisper the presence of the supernatural. We were by no means romantic. As we lay together, a tight fit in that little bed, we did not discourse, as at other times we were wont, of going to sea, of green islands whose dark recesses are lighted up by the flash of birds of glorious plumage, of whales, and the savage with his bow and arrow. We did not even tingle in anticipation, though our prophetic spirits but too well knew the giddy and exhausting scene that every church chime brought nearer and yet nearer—a very St. Sepulchre’s of a toll was that. We sweated the sweat of night fear. We dreaded we knew not what, which is often worse than to dread a certainty. We could think of nothing but the black room in which we lay, and of the Thing which might be secretly stirring in it; we dreaded that we should suddenly feel something cold touch our cheeks in a groping way.

I thought I heard a movement downstairs, and exclaimed in a feeble twitter: “Is it the ghost of a monk?” And Rawdon faintly answered: “Ghosts can’t make any noise even if they were inclined to, because they’re essences.”

And then we cuddled together, not knowing but that we might have been overheard. A horrible night indeed. But God in mercy put us to sleep at last, and I was awakened from a heavy slumber by a hand straining at my shoulder. I opened my eyes. It was Mr. Mascot. I smiled at him, forgetting where I was. He had drawn up the blind, and the room was filled by the light of a bright morning.

"Get up, young gentleman," said the French master, striving to subdue his face to a likeness of inexorable horror. "There is your breakfast." He pointed to a tray on which was a plate of dry bread and two glasses of cold water. "I will wait for you whilst you put on your boots and break you fast."

We had no appetite for dry bread ; we should have had no appetite had the tray been loaded with salmon and sweetmeats. How do murderers contrive to make a good meal in the condemned cell before they are pinioned, and the dreary procession sets forth ?

"I would advise you to eat, if only one piece of bread," said Mr. Mascot. "Your stomachs are empty, it will support you. Come," and he motioned towards the tray.

"I don't want to eat," exclaimed Rawdon. "What are they going to do with us ?"

"Eat a piece of bread, my boy," said the master to me, his natural kindness breaking through.

"I can't eat," I whined, and took up Rawdon's cry. "What are they going to do with us ?"

He made no reply, but pulling out his watch mused a moment or two upon it, then with a faint shrug exclaimed : "Follow me."

The schoolroom, as you know, was over the cloisters in an elbow or angle. The playground was flooded with sunshine, and not a speck of dirt upon us was to be missed. A beggarly little pair we looked, soiled from our slumbers in the good ship *Rebecca*, and Mr. Dodson had provided,

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for a reason that will presently appear, to perfect our forlorn, neglected looks by compelling us to go to bed in our clothes and collars. Our linen was dirty, our hair wild, the skin of our hands and faces pleaded for soap, our collars, jackets, and small clothes were crumpled and creased, and in consequence our trousers had become too short for us. I could guess how I looked by observing the appearance of Rawdon. But I also noticed that he was unnaturally pale, his lips very white, his eyes wanting in brightness. He had a strained, hearkening air as of a young spirit that had been overwrought, and I felt his fingers twitch.

We gained the broad old staircase that conducted to the schoolroom. My heart was beating at a feverish rate, and I felt sick with it. The doors were closed. Mr. Mascot opened them with all the ceremony of a rehearsed business, and coming behind drove us, but not ungently, in.

The whole school was assembled, and it was quite clear that the boys were waiting for us. Mr. Dodson and Mr. Cheshire occupied their respective thrones. The masters sat squarely and sternly, each man in his place. I best remember the effect of the sudden sweep of boys' faces towards us as their heads rounded on our entrance. It was like the flight of white-breasted fowl starting at the end of the room, and vanishing at the bottom desks. Upon the desk before Mr. Dodson lay our gun, and a birch—an ugly invention. I had never seen one before.

“Step forward, Rawdon and Langmore,” exclaimed the reverend gentleman in a voice attuned to the majesty and dreadfulness of the scene. The rows of boys gazed breathless as we stepped to the desk. Never fell so deep a silence on so many heaving young breasts. Perhaps it might have been known to them that we had passed the night in Johnson's haunted room; if this was so, an ele-

ment of awe would combine with the other sensations with which they watched us.

Putting his hand to the floor by his side, Mr. Dodson brought up two paper hats of the shape known as fools' caps, and leaning forward he placed one on the head of Rawdon, and the other on my head. A little titter escaped some of the lads, an unwholesome effusion of very nervous merriment.

"You may laugh out, boys," said Mr. Dodson, standing up and talking with his pince-nez poised in his hand. "These lads justly deserve your ridicule and contempt. Observe their dirty and degraded appearance. This is the effect of running away from school. Boys who can act as these have, with such shocking and wicked deliberation, with such cool and insulting defiance of the obedience that is due to the discipline of this house and the heads which govern it, carry themselves entirely out of the boundary of my sympathy, and the only advice I have to offer them lies in this," said he, laying a large pink hand upon the birch. "You boys who are spectators of this painful scene will draw from it the necessary moral."

And then, taking up our gun, he proceeded to relate with a cynical smile how we ran away to shoot eider-ducks, how our destination was Norway, and he told the story of our adventure jocosely, with resolution to degrade us yet. Some sycophantic laughter attended his delivery, but spite of our dirt and our fools' caps, that gun, and our having made good our escape, and our having been to sea, made us heroes in the eyes of most of the boys, and the mirth was certainly not encouraging to Mr. Dodson.

"Take this gun, sir, place it on your shoulder, and march to the end of the room. And you follow him, that all may get a good sight of you," said the reverend gentleman fiercely, seizing the gun and quitting his seat to adjust the wretched old fowling-piece upon my poor little friend's shoulder.

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This march almost broke my heart. It was suffered in death-like silence, and that was the terrible part of it. I might have moved with some faint fancy of buoyancy had a fiddle gone before us, or a fife; but to walk hatted as we were, with poor Rawdon in front of me staggering under his gun, breathlessly watched by the boys on either hand, who devoured the fowling-piece with their gaze, and forgot, in their wonder and admiration of it, to laugh at us; to be sensible, moreover, that this galling performance was Mr. Dodson's introduction of the real tragedy which lay upon his desk—I say, my heart was nearly broken. I stepped close at the heels of Rawdon but shed no tear, and we marched as far as the stove; whereupon Mr. Cheshire, whose desk we had now approached, and who was surveying us with something of pity, said mildly:

“Turn back, Rawdon, and follow him, Longmore.”

On a sudden, when we came abreast of the stool on which Mr. O'Connor sat perched, holding together, with some effort, a very judicial countenance, Rawdon shrieked out in a voice of delirium—

“I can't stand this! You mustn't do it to me! I'll tell my——” He tore off his cap without finishing the sentence, the gun fell from his shoulder, and he dropped headlong in a fit.

I pulled off my cap too, and believing Rawdon to be dead, fell upon him, and put my arm around his neck, and kissed him, for I loved him as I believed he loved me, with a simple, sincere, natural passion beyond my art to define. Probably Mr. Dodson thought I too had fallen in a fit. Mr. Cheshire came running to us; all was commotion. I was lifted and put on my feet, and Mr. Dodson, who had hastened from his desk, exclaimed in a voice denoting uncontrollable agitation—

“Mr. Mascot, Mr. O'Connor, lift him up and carry him to bed. Jackson senior, run and tell Ambrose to fetch a doctor instantly.”

A long-legged boy sped like a greyhound through the schoolroom. The masters carried the form of Rawdon out of that long room, and whilst this was doing Mr. Dodson held a whispered consultation with Mr. Cheshire. The latter then said, "Come with me," and extended his hand. I took it, and as we passed Mr. Dodson's desk I looked with terror at the birch.

"No, no," said Mr. Cheshire, who seemed to interpret my emotion by the spasmodic action of my hand. "It is all right ; it is ended," and we went downstairs.

I took my cap from one of the pegs in the cloisters, and walked by Mr. Cheshire's side to the library in Mr Dodson's house.

"You will remain here," said he, "until your friends send for you."

"Isn't anything more to be done to me, sir?" said I, in a quivering voice, and eyes trembling with tears.

"I hope not—I think not," he answered, patting me encouragingly with his plump white hand upon the top of my head. "But you have acted very wickedly, and neither Rawdon nor you are any longer pupils of this establishment."

He creaked massively off with his stoop and square shape, and shut the door behind him, and I seated myself upon the corner of a chair. I did not understand what I was to wait for, and as Mr. Cheshire's answer as regards anything more happening was distinctly unsatisfactory, my imagination went to work, and soon I was seated in a torment of fear, expecting every minute to see Mr. Dodson enter with a cane or the birch with which we were to have been publicly flogged. I could get no reassurance out of the passage of time, and my mind was in a very sad way indeed with the straining of its young imaginations.

I cannot recall how long I had been alone in that study or library when the door was opened by Ambrose, and to my unspeakable amazement and delight, my father walked

in. He walked in indeed, but he came to a dead halt, thunderstruck at my appearance. I rushed to him, and then began to cry in downright earnest. He drew me to the window to look at me, and was evidently shocked by my hollow, dirty face, and dull eyes, and blubbered cheeks. He sat down and placed me at his knee, and looking at me very gravely said :

"Now for the whole truth, my child. Did you steal your godfather's spoon and fork out of their case?"

"Yes," I whimpered; "they were mine."

"They were not yours. That act has deeply wounded your mother's and my heart."

I wept freely, and swore I would never steal again if he would forgive me this time. He asked me what I had done with the things, and I related the story of the purchase of the gun. He asked other questions, and drew from me a full narrative of our expedition and our intentions, and I told him that we had been locked up all night in a haunted room, and had marched up and down in paper caps before the whole school with the gun, and I said we should have been flogged, with all the boys looking on, if Rawdon hadn't saved us by falling down dead.

"Dead!" cried he with a great start.

"He fell flat, and they carried him to bed, and sent for a doctor."

"No doubt a fit," said he. And he questioned me about the haunted room, and I never saw his face take on so stern an air as it wore whilst he listened, and whilst he examined my neglected filthy appearance.

"Have they given you anything to eat?" said he.

"They put dry bread and cold water into the bedroom," I answered, "but we couldn't eat."

He jumped up, and was making for the bell, at which instant in stepped Mr. Dodson, pinker than usual, but his face was composed. Doubtless he had been told that my

father had called. The chilly bow they exchanged filled the air with danger.

"I believe," began my father in his loftiest manner, "that this is a school for the sons of gentlemen. I sent my son to you as a gentleman, and you return him to me as a chimney-sweep!"

"His plight is of his own bringing about," exclaimed Mr. Dodson. "I desired that he should prove an example to the boys, and I am very sorry that the fainting of his companion hindered me from flogging him in the face of the whole school."

"I am very glad that you didn't flog him," said my father. "I am rather a peculiar man; had you laid a hand upon my child you would have found me a *very* peculiar man."

"I beg that you will remove him," said Mr. Dodson, a little pale with disgust and astonishment. "He deserves to have been publicly expelled, but I made allowance for his youth, and have rescued him from a reproach which might prove a stumbling-block in his future career."

"You are considerate indeed," cried my father in passionate scorn. "My son's future is not to be influenced by the leniency or the brutality of a schoolmaster, even though he ties a white cloth round his throat, and tries to look the part he is unable to act."

"I must request you to take your son away at once," said Mr. Dodson, who stood stiff with indignation.

"You locked this boy up in a haunted room, he tells me. You might have driven him out of his mind. Look at him!" cried my father, trembling with passion. "You exposed him in his dirty condition to the gaze of his schoolmates, and compelled him to walk at the heels of the poor little fellow whose feeble shoulders your merciless hand loaded with a gun. It seems to me you take a particular delight in punishing boys, but in punishing them without reference to their age or to the character of

their offense, which, depend upon it, in a school is never very great. Does it please you to reflect upon the pain that right hand of yours has inflicted upon boys? You flourish a sort of bat, I am told, nicely calculated to fracture the fingers and paralyze the arm of the child you hit with it."

He fell back a step, and looking at Mr. Dodson whilst he still trembled with passion, he shouted: "You may call yourself a clergyman, but I call you an infernal coward!"

Mr. Dodson flung open the door.

"If you do not walk out with your son, you shall be forcibly ejected," he said.

The pink had died out of his face; it was twilight after sunset. As my father had spoken his mind very freely, he perhaps considered he need say no more, but he did not immediately move, and I saw his chest heaving, and he looked so menacingly at Dodson, and Dodson looked so wildly at him, that I believed if I clapped my hands they would fly at each other like dogs.

"Come," said my father, grasping me by the wrist, and he walked on swift legs out of the house, striking Miss Mitchell, who had been listening outside, and causing her stout form to revolve into the accuracy of a single measure of waltz; but he did not halt to apologize; he did not seem to see her or to know that his elbow had struck her. All the while he walked he muttered threats. I never before knew him in such a rage. He turned when we were at the gate, and looked at the house and buildings, and shook his fist at them. We then entered the road and went home.

Thus ingloriously terminated my schooldays at Dodson's and Cheshire's. I had entered slobbered and clean, and I departed slobbered and filthy. That was all, and I cannot recollect there was very much between. I cling to certain heresies in the matter of schools, I consider that if you

teach a boy to read, write, and cipher, then for the average purposes of life, for literature, trade, commerce, the fine arts, politics, you have taught him all he requires, and the rest he picks up as he goes along. What he does not get for himself, he will not get from the schoolmaster. I carried out very little I had not carried in to Dodson's school, and I saw more, learned more, felt more, and realized more in those runaway two days than I had dreamed of whilst reading my book, leaping about the playground, and going to bed.

I will do my father the justice to say that when his passion had abated, he expressed sorrow that he should have lost his temper.

"You know," he said to my mother, whilst they watched me eating a good breakfast, after which, at a wholesome interval, I was to be kneaded into whiteness in a bath, "you way as well quarrel with a woman as a parson. But the provocation was enormous! Look at the dirt upon him as he sits there! Think of his little companion being so worked up as to faint! Think of them being locked up in a haunted room all night long!"

Here my mother burst in with some warm expressions. She said she would not care if Mr. Dodson were twenty clergymen. She resolved if she met him in the street to tell him that he was a brute.

"The boys had no right to run away, certainly," said my father, "and enough, I trust, has been said about the silver spoon and fork. Yet what boy, with the spirit of a boy, but is actuated by the spirit of adventure? Most boys would run away, but they are afraid. Mind you, this was a very imbecile undertaking. Eider-duck shooting, one gun, no powder, no clothes, not a centime in money!"—he laughed dismally. "Yet his very inanity should have excused him to Dodson. Youth was never writ so large upon the forehead of adventure."

CHAPTER X.

THE MIDSHIPMAN'S ADVICE.

AFTER this I hung about idle at home for two or three months, during which the gun was returned to the bagman, who, when he had been forced amid convulsions of shrugs to hand over the spoon and fork, was threatened for his honesty with the surveillance of the police. My father, however, in this as in other matters always acted as the rather peculiar man which he declared himself to be.

I was then sent as a day-boarder to a French school, vehemently protesting. I assured my father and mother that I knew all that was necessary, and that further education was only wasting money, and I begged them to let me go to sea, where I should become at once a man, clear of schoolmasters and haunted rooms, with a beautiful, round, shining world to climb over. My father seemed disposed to take my views of education, but held that I was too young to be sent to sea, and he objected to my living in idleness at home, and cruising about the harbor, where I was sure to get into mischief. So I was taken one day to a French school kept by a Monsieur Belloc, who guaranteed his academy free from corporal punishment.

He was a tall, dark, fat man, with a rosy cheek and a light blue coat, which made him look like a butcher. A few English boys attended his school, which was of an inferior quality; the Latin master taught out of cribs, and I learned that Belloc took boys in exchange for beef, groceries, and other commodities. Here, I am sorry to say, my dislike of the French boy was exasperated and

deepened by many fights, often attended by bloody results, and this dislike to this hour I cannot shake off. I found these French boys bullies, cowards, and sneaks, with a constant passionate hatred of us English boys as English. They sneered at the Duke of Wellington, they called Lord Nelson a coward, they would impudently whistle the airs of a silly chanty about Malbrook going to the wars and never returning, and the like. The result was, that I received several black eyes in the name and for the further glory of my great fellow-countrymen, as did others of my English schoolfellows. We could also exhibit dishonorable wounds in the form of blue marks upon our shins, and some of the English boys after these fights complained of pains in their stomachs.

It is certain the French hate us. They are taught to hate us when they are boys, and they continue to hate us when they are men. They are a treacherous people, as dangerous in this age as ever they were in the days of Bonaparte, and I never see our Press kow-towing to them, and then read the French papers' abuse of Albion, without wishing that our editors, instead of directing journals, commanded men-of-war.

But though Belloc warranted his school free from barbarity, minute acts of inhumanity were practised, of which let me recall an instance. We had a meagre day in the week, which of course was Friday, but we Protestant English boys ate meat, and laughed to see the French boys guzzling down hot water and carrots. One Friday after I had made a full meal without pudding—Protestants got no pudding on Friday; it was served out to the French boys—I was in the playground just beginning to skip about, when a French master stepped out of the dining-room and coming up to me caught hold of my ear, and said :

“Longmore, you have not finished your dinner.”

“Yes I have,” I answered.

“Come along and finish your dinner,” said he, and by

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the ear he dragged me, already uncomfortably full, back to the table.

He ordered me to sit down and eat up a quantity of potato and bread which I had left.

“Monsieur Belloc does not allow waste,” said he.

The potato was cold, and the bread dark and heavy, and I felt before beginning as if I was all waistcoat. I cannot express with what sickness I ate up that cold potato and dark bread while the master stood over me. It makes me ill to recall the thing. He compelled me, with many threats of being kept in, of lines to learn by heart, and soon, to make a cleansweep and then, nearly bursting, I went slowly back into the playground, and leaned against a wall.

For years afterwards I never could take potato and bread at once into my mouth without feeling ill. The medical man might make a note of this. It “indicates” a method of correcting what is vicious and depraved in the taste of the young. For example: a boy buys a clay pipe and a screw of tobacco, and smokes in a cellar, or elsewhere darkly, always attended by admiring companions. Two or three whiffs will satisfy his natural appetite, but if you could get a master to stand over him and force him to smoke on until he has exhausted his bowl of black shag, he might—I do not say he *would*—be cured for life of the taste for tobacco.

The months passed, and one day my birthday arrived and made me thirteen. My father had consulted the midshipman whose friends lived at Bouville, and he had told him that thirteen was just the age for a boy to start in the sea-life. He was asked to dinner in consequence of this reply, and I met him flesh to flesh for the first time, though I had often viewed him from afar, and gazed at his uniform with envy and admiration, and watched his deep-sea rolling walk, which I now think was rather put on, for he rolled in needless lurches, though I tried to imitate him.

He was of Scotch extraction, with a long throat, little eyes, freckles, and red hair. The palms of his hands were covered with warts through pulling and hauling, and the dark lines in them he said were tar. He was in the service of a Liverpool firm, and was a very sensible young man, had been to sea four years, and he disappointed me because he talked in plain English instead of using nautical words, and because he did not seem to entertain a very exalted opinion of the sea as a calling.

"What line would you recommend?" said my father.

"Many fine ships are sailing out of Blackwall," answered the midshipman. "They go fully manned, and the youngsters are comfortably berthed in the 'tween-decks. The first year's premium would be about fifty pounds.

"Are boys roughly used at sea?" asked my mother.

"I never was roughly used," replied the midshipman.

"I don't think men change their natures by going to sea," said my father. "Why should sailors be thought barbarous and brutal? The same men, had they remained ashore, would have been neither. Does the sea transform the character? I doubt it."

"Sailors are not understood, sir," said the midshipman.

"A story is told of a girl who pulled her mother by the arm and whispered: 'Are those people sailors, ma? Why, they're just like men.'"

"What did your outfit cost, may I ask, if it is not a rude question?" said my father.

The midshipman in his reply gave my father some good advice. He begged him not to be led away by the representations of the outfitters, who would crowd a boy's chest with six dozen of drill breeches and twelve dozen of linen shirts. These articles of clothing very often found their way into the hands of the steward, or baker, or cook, who in exchange would treat the lad with a delicacy out of the cuddy, or a jam tart or hot roll out of the galley. He said that the outfitter was by nature a rogue. He could not

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help it any more than a Frenchman could help being sick when crossing the Channel. "They begin to tout and tell lies as soon as they start in business," said he. "They tempt you by offering loans of money."

All this which was very useful conversation to my father is of no interest here, so I cut it short. After dinner the midshipman honored me with an invitation to accompany him in a stroll upon the pier, and he offered to talk to me about the sea. My father and mother were very grateful, and I was extremely proud. I would have sooner been seen in the company of that or any other midshipman in buttons and badge, than arm-in-arm with a Prince of the blood royal, if dressed in plain clothes, and a landsman.

Rawdon and I had often talked of the sea when we lay in our little beds, side by side, and our imaginations were curiously romantic, and we saw the world of waters in the beauty of moonlight, for all was mystical, and we believed in the mermaid. This midshipman had been to sea four years, and when I had asked him a few questions I found that he was not in the smallest degree sentimental or poetical. He said: "Don't you believe in that longshore rot. Men who were never at sea in their lives sit down and write sea books for boys, and, unfortunately, the lies they tell aren't detected, nor their blunders laughed at by the public, who are as ignorant of the ocean as they are. I was looking at a boy's book the other day, and the writer makes the captain and his two mates sleep in a bunk and a couple of hammocks in the companion-way of a small schooner. What do you think of that?"

I was flattered by my opinion being asked, and although I did not know what a companion-way meant, I put on a look of contempt.

"That same schooner carries a coxswain. What do you think of that?" said the midshipman. "Think of the coxswain of a schooner?"

"Is it ridiculous?" said I.

"Such a thing as the coxswain of any craft but a boat was never heard of since Noah launched his ark. And that coxswain," he went on, "does not know how to steer, for he tells the boy to luff, and the boy puts the helm hard up, and the coxswain is satisfied. There are a hundred other blunders equally ridiculous. You'll find the life hard—I wouldn't say that before your mother." And then he talked to me about the beef and pork which the sailors eat. "No man knows what beast of the field the beef was, when it was created, and how long it had been extinct, and the pork is a greater wonder even than the beef, because it is not real pig, such as people eat ashore, but an animal that was originally discovered by shipowners, and herded by them in South American plains expressly for sailors' use." He told me of pieces of ship's biscuits which he had, with his own eyes, seen moving upon the table upon the legs of the maggots it contained.

I asked him if sailors were expected to eat those maggots, and he answered that they tried to knock them out, but to little purpose, and so they went down, and indeed provided the seamen with the only fresh mess they got between ports. This midshipman advised me not to smoke. He said that pipes stopped boys from growing if sucked too young, and many a bright prospect had been ruined by boys making up their minds not to grow, in spite of the prayers or threats of their friends. He gave me very good advice, but before I had finished my walk with him I had begun to think that the life of the sea was not the gay, merry, shining and dashing existence which Rawdon and I had imagined it. We had never thought of bilgewater for instance, nor of being kept on deck in heavy weather all through a long, black night to keep the ship clear of ice, which loomed in pale mountains all about, amidst the ghastly strokes of the frothing heads of seas.

I enjoyed my stroll with this midshipman, and was very

proud of myself. We stood on the edge of the quay, and he made me observe the difference between the brigantine and the brig, the lugger and the schooner. I asked him if he knew the compass, and he at once boxed it for me, both backwards and forwards, much to my delight and astonishment at his powerful memory.

Whilst we were walking leisurely towards the town he asked me if I would like a cake. I thought that no sailor should own to anything so unmanly as liking cakes, and I answered with affected importance that I never ate them.

"Don't you?" said he. "Now, see here, all boys like cakes, and you like cakes above most boys." I grinned. "Don't you never be too manly or sham tastes beyond your years. They'll find you out at sea, and it might lead to difficulties. Come in here with me, and eat a jolly good cake."

He took me into an English pastrycook's, the shop from whose side door Mr. Tommy Dodd had rolled that night when the policeman was talking to us two runaway boys. Had my aversion to cake been unaffected—it was not, I could eat it by the pound—I should have been willing to have gorged myself upon it after what he had said. So when he exclaimed, "What will you have?" I cast my eyes over a collection of delicious cakes, tarts, buns, and other such things in greater variety than I can express, all enriching the atmosphere with the sweet scent of baking and jam, and picked up a large tart. He too chose a tart, and ate so heartily that I was ashamed of my manliness, and on his invitation greedily took another large jam tart from the counter, and he followed my example, though we had both dined well,

I could not understand, however, the easy familiar manner in which he smiled upon the young lady who stood behind the counter. He called her Miss, and asked if she considered herself as sweet as the confectionery she sold. She was an English girl, probably a relation of Tommy

Dodd, and answered him back, but not offensively. She had an eye to business. She desired to keep on selling tarts, otherwise one could have seen by her saucy sharp eyes and by her peculiar pert lift of nose that she could have sunk the midshipman into a mental condition akin to idiocy after two or three rounds. I was surprised that he should have been familiar with people who were his inferiors. But he was evidently a great admirer of the ladies, and I had noticed whilst we walked that he looked very hard at the girls we passed, and winked at a nurse-maid driving a child on the opposite pavement.

In about a fortnight after this my father took me with him to London. In those days there were no steamers from Bouville to the opposite coast, and we had to travel by the diligence, a distance of fifty or sixty miles, to reach a port which would provide us with steam. I was now to see life indeed, but not until we got out of the diligence. The journey was cruelly tedious; it was like a voyage round the world with Captain Cook. The wheels of this old wagon leaned hard out from the sides like the ears of some boys I have known. The driver incessantly cracked his whip, the four horses clanked like a regiment of cavalry as they rushed down-hill, pursued by the coach, and they still made a great deal of noise but very little way when they went up-hill.

My father was punished during this journey by having for a fellow-passenger an Irish clergyman who had probably been stripped of his gown, though he wore the dress of the Church. This man proved even more irreligious than my father, who was presently alarmed and disgusted, and made many efforts to change the conversation; but the clergyman meant to enjoy himself, and poured impiety into my father's ear whilst the coach thundered and the horses strained and rattled. We broke the journey at a small, ancient town, where the clergyman left us, after

handing an old card to my father and asking him if he could oblige him with the loan of ten francs, and next day before noon we arrived at the seaport.

A steamer was sailing that night for London Bridge, and we made haste to secure a passage. We were at liberty to embark in the afternoon, and did so, and at six o'clock we were drinking tea with the master of the vessel in the saloon, a hearty, well-fed man, of a rich, red complexion, dressed in a cap with a gold band round it, and a coat with brass buttons. I had never before seen a steamer, and, going on deck, stood staring up at the very tall funnel with the utmost amazement. I leaned over the side to count the paddles, then I wandered to a hatch covered with brass wire, through which I peered and saw an immense arm of metal buried in the gloom, and I managed to make out something that resembled a grasshopper of giant size waiting for the order to hop.

The tide did not serve until eight ; the captain mounted the bridge and the ship began to move, and a very large crowd grew excited and ran with us along the quayside. Steam was still very young, though that that paddle-boat should have been viewed with admiration and wonder is not strange. She would astonish us even in this age of the ocean-liner and the gorgeous interior. It was a dark, but a clear night, and there was a half moon somewhere in the sky. I watched the lights along the harbor slide past, and then the pier lights went astern, and next moment the steamer was bowing the sea with a sullen roar of foam forward, whilst the creaming race of her paddles ran into a wake as long as the milky way. Thick coils of smoke spangled with the golden gems of the furnace blew from the chimney, and the wind carried them in a thunder-cloud down upon the sea. It was wonderful ! I gazed up and I gazed round, but, unfortunately, my father began to feel seasick and cold.

“ Why can't I remain on deck ? ” said I. “ I don't feel

sick, and when I'm a sailor I shall be forced to keep on deck."

This was an original view, and struck him. Muttering "Very well ; you know our cabin," he rushed to the companion-way, and I heard him through the skylight, a frame of which lay open, howling for the steward.

I walked about the deck and managed to keep my feet. A number of people lay about the fore-deck in wideawakes and cloaks, helplessly seasick. Every now and again a stoop of the bow cooled the poor beggars with half a bucket of brine, but they were past caring. Come death ! Come damnation ! It was all one, and their groans were hideous. They were Frenchmen, and it is impossible not to sympathize with Mr. Thackeray's contempt of Frenchmen as sailors. I looked through the engine-room hatch which lay open, and saw the great grasshopper arms revolving, and was awestruck by the gushes of red fire which came and went among the swinging machinery. The engines sang a song of their own, so interpretable, that young as I was, I put words to it as I watched. They said most distinctly—

" Oh, stand there and watch us swinging,
Oh, come down and hear us ringing ! "

and thus, over and over again, till it changed in a second, and I found myself singing new words to the quarreling music.

Whilst I was looking the captain approached, and observing me, called me to him. My father, when we drank tea with the old gentleman, had told him I was going to be a merchant sailor, and this, I suppose, made him take an interest in me.

" Would you like to step on the bridge, young fellow-my-lad ? " said he.

" I should indeed, sir," I answered.

" Then come along," and at once we mounted the ladder.

I immediately supposed the weather had changed, and that it had come on to blow a gale at the very instant of our setting foot on the bridge. What I felt was the strong breeze made by the ship's own progress, and this, backed by the wind that was blowing, excited me as greatly as if our paddles had rolled us into a heavy storm. Here now was I taking a view of the sea at night from the height of the bridge of a vessel that was steaming through the water at about twelve knots. How deeply affected I was I may know by the keen recollection I preserve of that dusky figure of old-time steamer bursting through the sulky roll of sea, often lighting up its coil of sooty smoke with crimson flames, so that I sometimes thought the ship was on fire. The sea-glow sparkled like emeralds in the pallid bow-race; it gleamed and shuddered cold, and wan, upon the wide, faint road we left upon the night. The stars shone merrily, the clouds flew past, and the moon was going away over the Channel in a piece of red light.

We came up with a phantom collier, a leaning, staggering shape, doubtless some hours out of our port. I thought she was at anchor. Her canvas end on to us looked like ribs, and she swung hungry and gaunt as a ship of death in that gloom till we had opened her sails, and then the helpless shadow veered astern and died out against the stars in the tail of our wake.

The captain allowed me to remain on the bridge half an hour, and talked to me as if I had been a man; he then advised me to go below and turn in. The saloon was a miserable scene; it was hot and dimly lighted, and it groaned and creaked most abominably. Shelves ran in a row on either hand, and upon them lay the passengers. Here, as forward, they were mostly French, and when they were seasick they made a frightful outcry. At the table sat two or three men eating bread and cheese and onions and drinking bottled beer; possibly a more elegant repast would have upset their stomachs.

When I entered the cabin which my father lay in—one of two or three called “state” cabins—I found him very poorly indeed ; he had been drinking brandy, which, as he had not taken food, had disagreed with him. The cabin was close to the engine room, and received a full drench of its perfumes and clangors.

“This is awful !” said my father, as the vessel leaned a little heavily. “Who would not be sick in this ‘state cabin,’ as they absurdly term it ? The engines run in my brains, and there is a paddle wheel in each ear, and my nose is blocked with the smell of oil.” Here he uttered a groan, and added : “But if I had gone to the end I should have felt the motion worse. I was advised to choose the middle—and here I am.”

However, I thought he was old enough to look after himself and as I could scarcely keep my eyes open, I pulled off my coat and boots, climbed into the bunk over his head, and almost immediately fell asleep.

We arrived at four o'clock in the afternoon at London Bridge. A dingy haze in the river delayed us ; it did more, it shrouded and obscured the view all the way from Gravesend, and I, who was hanging about the deck thirsting to see scenes and places I had read about in history, saw almost nothing worth speaking of. I particularly wanted to sight Greenwich. This is a wonderful town that is not situated upon a meridian of longitude like other places. Here lives the Astronomer Royal, who compels all British sea-captains to keep time by his clocks ; if they do not, their ships go ashore. At Greenwich, too, I had read, Queen Elizabeth sometimes held her court, and through reading about the Armada, and hanging over pictures of that glorious princess, with a gown like a bell, and a ruff like a trencher, I loved her with a secret passion, and had she been living should have run away again at all costs in the hope of being taken a fancy to by her, and caressed. But Greenwich with fog was that day as obscure as history itself.

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One thing we did see when it was too late : this was a dumb-barge which we cut in halves, and which sank under our bows. Three men climbed up in ropes, and no lives were lost. But they were soaked and mad, and their language was sad. The sailors of the steamer swore too ; but the bargees out-cursed them with such hideous fluency as to render the sailors' speech mild as children's abuse. No man can swear like a Thames bargee, and it was my fortune to hear three of them that day swearing all at once. They were taken into the engine room to be dried, cursing the captain, the steamer, the sailors, the river, themselves—in short, whatever occurred to them to curse—at every step.

At last we arrived at London Bridge. Of what followed I have no clear recollection, owing probably to the fog. The first thing I did was to lose my father, and as I had no money in my pocket, and no address to drive to, I was in a state of terror, and ran about amongst men in tall hats and linen coats, and amongst foreigners who could not speak our tongue, and shook their fists at people who could. It is impossible to describe the character of the crowd (the whole pervaded by a curious smell of dried fish and stale beer), through whose legs and under whose arms I darted in my terrified hunt for my father ; till all at once I saw him standing at the door of a cab with our portmanteaux on top, and in a few minutes we were rumbling on our way to a hotel in the City.

We sat in a wonderful old cab. It gaped and yawned, and we expected to see the cabman driving off on the box and leaving us in the cab. The bottom was covered with damp straw, the windows rattled like castanets, and when we put them down we could not get them up, and after we had got them up we could not put them down. We caught a sight of the Monument and St. Paul's. I did not take much interest in the Monument, in spite of my father saying that he considered the poet Pope right in

calling it "A living lie in breeches," by which I now see he was a little mixed in metaphor and authority.

"It marks the spot where the Great Fire of London began," said my father. "And perhaps it doesn't," he added a moment after. "For who is to convince me that the fire began exactly there? There is the dome," he went on. "There's St Paul's."

It glided out of sight behind the houses and in the fog.

"Now you have seen two of London's wonders," said he. "St. Paul's would have been a fine building had Wren not designed it."

He then began to talk about my outfit, and our plans for next day, and in this conversation we arrived at the hotel.

I shall always be of opinion that the little old-fashioned hotel in the city was amazingly more comfortable in all respects of food, service, and lodging, than the huge buildings in which we wander like the living dead after the Resurrection who roamed about searching for their friends. I remember a cosy dining-room, plenty of old oak richly flushed, a chimney-piece which might have framed Henry VIII.'s burly figure when he warmed himself; a few small tables prepared for the meal; a gleam of silver and cutlery. It was pleasant to draw to a fire after sitting in that cab of damp straw. Never before did I enjoy a meal so much as that plain dinner of fried sole, English roast beef, and cauliflower. My father ordered some port, and said to me quietly, when the waiter was not listening, that it was very fine wine, full of body. I drank ginger beer. The waiter took an interest in us, and we encouraged him to talk, and he told us that he had been on the establishment twenty years, and that his views for the future were uncertain.

"Might there be a h'opening in France for an English waiter?" he asked.

My father begged him to come to Bouville and he would

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introduce him to the hotel-keepers there. I should have guessed the man's term of service by his feet; he wore slippers with bows, and his feet, which turned out at an angle of forty-five degrees, rested flat upon the floor, and there were no heels in him. They were the feet of a man who has walked, and, boy-like, I often looked at them.

Next morning after breakfast we went to Limehouse, where were situated the offices of the owner in whose employ my father had determined to enter me as a midshipman.

CHAPTER XI.

BELLE STUART.

I do not propose to introduce the reader to the ship-owner whose offices were at Limehouse, nor will I ask him to accompany me on my first, second, and third voyages. The romance of my youth did not begin till I had started on my fourth voyage. I was then third mate, and my age was about twenty.

By this time, my father and mother having grown weary of Bouville had taken a house at Hammersmith, and were in good health, and happy, and seemed to enjoy the change from French habits and fashions to the customs and victuals they had been born into. My ship was the *Glen-dower*, a full-rigged ship of 1320 tons register. Owing to a chill, I was unable to join her in the East India Docks, and wrote to the office that I was ill, but should be better and go to Plymouth, and there catch the ship. I sent my chest to the vessel before she left the Thames. I recovered as I expected, bade father and mother good-by, jumped into a cab with a small bag, and was driven to the terminus of the Great Western Railway at Paddington.

I was too soon. A row of carriages stood beside the platform but no locomotive was attached. Some drunken Navy sailors were arguing on a bench. A few people moved about, or stood beside their baggage. I selected a carriage, put my bag on the seat to secure it, lighted a pipe, and walked up and down the platform waiting for the train to start.

Much about this time two people came along followed

by a man servant, who carried a shawl or two and a lady's portmanteau. One of the two was an elderly man, rather rough in appearance ; he was bronzed, bruised, and wrinkled with what I guessed had been a long but successful struggle for life in the Colonies. The other was a young lady. As I stood opposite my carriage they approached, looking into the several compartments as they walked, and I obtained without impertinently staring a very good view of the girl. She interested me in an instant, and I could not imagine why. It was not her beauty ; fair indeed she was. A sweeter face no man ever fell in love with ; hair a delicate pale auburn, eyes dark violet and thoughtful, cheeks colorless. What was it ? She looked at me once, but not again. Her attire was some dark stuff, but I don't think it was mourning. They passed down the length of a few more carriages, then came back.

I remained standing opposite the compartment I had chosen. Whilst they walked the rough-looking gentleman gazed at me fixedly. He stopped and said gruffly, but quite politely :

“ Beg pardon, but you are a sailor ? ”

“ I am,” I said.

“ Bound to Plymouth, sir ? ”

“ That's my port.”

“ What ship, sir ? ”

“ The *Glendower*,” I answered.

“ I had no doubt of it,” he exclaimed. “ I remember your face. I came on board your ship the *Glendower* at Sydney, and asked you some questions.”

I did not recollect the circumstances, so merely bowed.

“ What post do you occupy ? ” and now I noticed that the girl observed me steadfastly.

“ I am third mate,” I answered ; “ which means no more than midshipman.”

“ My niece,” said he, “ is going to Sydney to her aunt by your ship. I am unable to see her safe on board. Do

you know if there are any of the *Glendower's* passengers joining her by this train ? ”

I was unable to tell him. More people had come draining in, and the platform was fairly populous. But nobody looked as if he was going to Australia. The young lady flushing up, exclaimed—

“ Is your name Longmore ? ”

“ It is,” said I, and then even as I looked I saw before me that strange and beautiful phantom of the pond, whose expression had been neither glad nor sorrowful.

“ Is it possible ? ” said I, “ that you are the Belle Stuart I played horses with ? ”

“ I am indeed,” she answered, “ and I believe I knew you when I first saw you.”

“ In this the gentleman who saw your ghost, Belle ? ” asked the rough-looking gentleman.

She smiled, with plenty of color left.

“ A queer yarn—a little fantastical : Belle does not forget it,” said he. “ This is a fortunate meeting. I shall feel easy whilst thinking of my niece as under the care of an officer of the ship, and an old playfellow. John, put Miss Stuart’s wraps and bag in.”

“ I am delighted to think that you are going out as a passenger,” said I, looking into her charming face, which awoke many memories, though I was so young when that incident of the pond occurred that it had produced no emotional impression whatever, so that when the little girl did not come to drink tea I had forgotten that she had been asked.

A great locomotive barged into the carriages.

“ I will ask you to see her safe on board, Mr. Longmore, and shall be grateful for any acts of attention you show her,” said the rough-looking gentleman.

There was now too much bustle for talk. Porters were running about, passengers were getting in ; the drunken sailors looked out of the windows. We took our seats

after Miss Stuart had tenderly kissed the rough-looking gentleman ; the guard piped his whistle ; the book-stalls and the refreshment rooms slid past ; it was the broad guage, smooth, swift, delightful as railway traveling can ever be, and presently we were clear of the station, ourselves the only occupants of the compartment.

It is a fact that I retained a very perfect recollection of the features of the phantom, and in the girl sitting opposite to me I beheld the imagination of my brain, that vision of my soul's eye, clothed in the grace and sweetness of womanhood, somewhat tall, a most beautiful figure an expression of face as captivating as some haunting gem of poetry. She asked after my father and mother, and I inquired after her mother, and she answered that she had died eighteen months ago. She was going out to Sydney to live with an aunt. The only relative she had in England was the gentleman who had seen her off. Mr. George Stubbs was her uncle and a widower, and strongly approved of her living with her aunt out in Australia.

She said : " Your people must have thought my poor mother very rude. I reminded her that I was to drink tea with you, but she would not hear of it—would not even call at your house again, and as soon as possible left Bouville. She was indeed more terrified than you would believe."

" She was a little superstitious perhaps ?"

" She was a spiritualist, and believed in ghosts and visions, but, strange to say, was afraid of those who saw them. You saw them, and she was afraid of you."

" I only saw one," said I : " I can never hope to explain it. It was you shaped in moonlight, and when I fell into the water the same face came close to mine. I have seldom thought of it since."

" I have thought of it over and over again," said she. " It was like believing I was dead, and that you had seen my spirit. Your parents will think mother acted very

rudely," she repeated. "But she got some extraordinary notion about you into her head, and we left the town," she exclaimed laughing, "as hurriedly as if we had been in debt."

I saw that she knew the character of the notion that had entered her mother's head about me; in fact her looks betrayed her, but I asked no questions, and we fell into other courses of talk. I related for her entertainment a few of my sea experiences, and told her how I had run away from school. Her own life had been uneventful; they had lived in Leamington, and then in London, where her mother had died. She told me that her mother was always talking of returning to the Colony, but she delayed it year after year, and then it was too late.

Sailors see little of ladies, and this explains perhaps why Jack is not over particular. A man in my time might be away for two or three years without seeing a woman, unless black or yellow, and people are surprised if he marries the first girl he meets on his return home. In my case, however, the delight I took in looking at this girl who sat opposite was not due to my taste for distinguishing being blunted by the isolation of the ocean life. She was a thorough lady; her voice was soft and clear; I could not but wonder that so fair and engaging a girl had not got married. We found plenty to talk about, and Swindon surprised us.

"This is very good traveling," said I, at which she smiled, and I took her into the refreshment room which was not very crowded.

Here I experienced the responsibility a man takes upon himself when he accepts the charge of a good-looking young lady. A snob, with a tuft on his chin, his hat cock-billed, his frock-coat cut so as to delineate his waist, and a quantity of well-oiled bushy hair standing out over each ear; this poor beggar began to make eyes at Belle as he leaned in the attitude of an exquisite of his day against

the counter drinking brandy and soda. I have not spoken of myself, but I may here say that the labors of the sea do not shrink men, but on the contrary they broaden them ; they give them turtle-backs, and table-tops for chests, and the arm of the seaman is formed of sinew of steel and muscle of iron, and a fist that is serious with knuckles, because a sailor is constantly using his hands and arms in hanging to the rigging aloft, in heaving in sweat to the windlass, in thrusting with bursting choruses at the bars of the capstan. I stood a trifle over six feet, and weighed eleven stone, but I may have looked a little younger than I was because I shaved my face clean.

Finding the snob determined to ogle Miss Stuart, I looked at him fixedly. He grew uneasy, tilted his hat, stood up, and swaggered. I was rash, and did not consider what was due to Miss Stuart, and I knew what the snob could not suspect I knew ; I mean, that I possessed some of the prime secrets of the prize-ring. For a man who had been a champion bruiser in his day, had failed as a publican and sailed as cook in the ship I went my second voyage in, and with this man, day after day in the dog watches I would stand up, the weather permitting, until I learned as much as he could show me. I remember three favorite blows, one was the stomach punch, the next was a smasher with the left fist in your opponent's ribs, instantly followed by third, striking the man with your right in the jugular vein under the ear. This third blow the bruiser informed me had more than once proved fatal.

I was rescued from a difficulty by the entrance of a man in a wide-brimmed low-crowned hat, fiery face, a belly like the half of a cannon ball, and a bull dog at his heels. The instant he saw the snob he pulled off his hat, bent himself in halves, and addressed him as "My lord." I did not fancy I heard aright until he had called him "my lord" five or six times in less than one minute. I had

never supposed the snob to be more than a draper's or grocer's assistant at large for the day, and wondered to find such a scurvy, impudent, ill-bred dog a lord, because having no acquaintance with the nobility, and having lived at Bouville or on board ship, I had got it into my head that a lord was a man of breeding, who was incapable of an ungentlemanly act, and who looked the distinguished position he filled. The two passed out of the refreshment room, the snob extracting an immense cigar from a case whilst he continued to leer at Miss Stuart. He went on the platform, and shortly afterwards the bell rang and we hastened to take our seats.

I don't think it would ever have come to a fight ; the snob did not look like a dangerous man, but the fellow's impudence, and the feeling that he required punishment and had escaped it, kept me ill-tempered for some time after we were bowling clear of Swindon. But I have since lived to learn that if a man takes charge of a pretty girl he must expect to be annoyed, and if he fights with every snob who ogles her and leers at her, he will discover that the snobs will prove one too many for him, even though he shall have mastered all the arts of the ring and is able to keep his temper.

We arrived at Plymouth, and I found that my ship had reached the Sound that afternoon. She had been delayed by head winds down Channel. All Miss Stuart's baggage was aboard of her, and it was convenient that we should join the ship at once, as it was necessary that I should report myself. I was disappointed. I had hoped to find that the ship had not arrived. I had looked forward to a ramble with Miss Stuart in one of the most romantic harbors in England, and a little dinner at the best, which is usually the cheapest hotel in the place. However, *there* was the ship, and we must join her, and it was five o'clock, and the sooner we left the better.

Plymouth Sound was a beautiful scene. There was to

be viewed what had passed away for ever—the line of battleships and the frigate. It was the great transition period of the marine. Sail was scarcely yielding to steam, and iron and steel were slowly taking the place of timber. Fleets of sailing ships flying the white and the red flags were to be met with in every sea, and almost in every port of the world, and I may honestly add that in point of equipment, appearance, and smartness, many of the Black-wall liners, and a number of Liverpool ships which sailed from the Thames and the Mersey to the Indies and Australia, ran the beauty of the frigate very close.

“There is your home for the next four months, Miss Stuart,” said I, as two boatmen rowed us leisurely to the ship.

“She’s a handsome vessel,” she exclaimed.

She looked so then. The melting light of the west was upon her ; her rigging was on fire with it. The glass of her cabin windows flashed to it ; rills of light drained into the water alongside of her. The canvas lay upon her yards like snow cleverly patted and molded ; and her yards were squared by trace and lift, and she looked a ship with real sailors on board of her, for there were plenty of men-of-war about, and when that used to be so, mercantile Jack would make his ship smart with a will.

We drew to the gangway below ; I paid the boatmen, who grumbled ; I handed Miss Stuart up the steps, and carried her shawls and portmanteau. Captain Bowser, the commander of the ship, in a naval cap and blue cloth jacket leaned over the poop rail watching us, and I saluted him. The air was full of the smell of hay in compressed bales, cocks crowed, pigs grunted forward, and you heard the lamentation of sheep in the longboat. We were outward bound, and though it is true we carried but twelve passengers in all, and they were of the saloon, we should touch nowhere until we entered Sydney Heads. The decks were quiet, the rigging had been coiled down. All

had been done in London. Indeed the ship called at Plymouth only for the convenience of passengers, and if the breeze served her she would sail next morning.

Miss Stuart needed no help : she sprang through the gangway, and when the captain saw her, he came down the poop ladder, and touching his cap, introduced himself. Boswer was a man of fifty, cooked to a turn by many years of seafaring. He had come in through the hawse-pipe, by which is signified he had begun his career in the forecastle, and you would not have called him a man of education, or very courtly in his address and manners. But he was a good sailor, and a safe and humane commander. He had a very large head, and, his neck was immensely thick, and lay in two or three rings under his hair at the back. His eyes were staring and glassy, and his general expression was a little wanting in meaning. With the smile of a skipper who addresses a passenger he said :

“Are you Miss Stuart?”

“I am,” she answered.

“Then you are the young lady who has been placed under my charge by your uncle, and I will take very good care of you,” said he. “Let me show you your cabin.”

They entered what was the custom then to call the cuddy, and I followed, bearing her wraps and bag. This interior was a large room carpeted and paneled. The mizen-mast pierced it, but the shaft was fluted, and by gilt and the decorative power of the artist transformed into an embellishment. Three good cabins were situated aft, one of which was occupied by the captain. Otherwise the saloon swept clear to the walls of the ship, and was indeed a very handsome, spacious apartment, filled with dining-tables, couches, arm-chairs and the like. A large square hatch yawned immediately in front of you as you entered, and down this sank the staircase by which Miss Stuart gained her berth.

The captain took the things from me, and Belle gave me a sweet bow, and said a little archly—"We shall often meet," which caused the captain to stare, for it is not customary for young ladies to talk familiarly—indeed to talk at all—to a midshipman, particularly when the captain is near, and I was no better than a midshipman, though I had signed as third mate.

I went up the steps considering I had sufficiently reported myself by having saluted the captain, and followed him into the cuddy, and stood a minute in the cuddy door to take a look round. The light was not yet faint, but it was red and wet with a squall in the west. Two or three ladies sat at a cabin table writing letters. Going a voyage was a serious thing in those days, and when you sent your last message home to your friends from Plymouth it often would be a twelvemonth before they could hear from you again. This sea condition is past, and never can return, for sailing ships are now so few that passengers seldom go in them, and they are gradually becoming so small in number that it is easy to prophesy a day soon at hand when you will find nothing in sail out of the Solent—and so much the better! for of all the creations of the yards, not omitting even the nightmare steam-tramp, nothing is so hideous as the lean iron ship of to-day, with her sorry show of painted ports and red bottom, her metal bowsprit—how different from the graceful jib-booms bearing their airy flight of canvas far beyond the path of the ship—her divided sails looking ragged as the tails of a kite, as she hungrily staggers across the seas, with the clews out of hail of the yard-arms, and everything for cheapness, including the German captain, the Danish mate, the Swedish second mate, and a few dirty rascals called the crew, who cannot tell you what nation they belong to, because if you speak in English they do not understand you. Yet she flies the red flag, and is a British vessel. Let me pray for the honor of the bunting that flamed at

the peaks of the Indiamen of the Thames and Mersey in my own and earlier days, that this mean and shameful travesty of a ship may rapidly disappear and never again be heard of.

The land shone in vivid hues over the bulwark rails, and all between was a breast of red water brushed by a breeze before which two brigs of war were blowing into the Sound, and they moved with the grace of pillars of sand whose march is on the desert. I went below to look after my chest and belongings. The midshipmen were berthed in the 'tween-decks, in a long, narrow, gloomy cabin, into which light was admitted only on one side by two or three scuttles. There was accommodation here for twelve young fellows in as many bunks, which ran round the compartment on both sides, and also forward ; but the after-end was fitted with shelves and cupboards, in which we kept our plates and knives and forks, and the cask of sugar and the few tins of preserved spuds which had been sent aboard for our special mess, in return for ten guineas exacted from the father of each lad in addition to his premium. No man can plunder with such sincerity, suavity, and dexterity as the ship-owner. He plunders the insurance people by sending defective vessels to sea ; he plunders his sailors by supplying them with the cheapest and most disgusting form of food that is anywhere to be met with out of a ship. He could not take a midshipman in my time without robbing his father of three costly premiums, made heavier by rascally charges for "mess-money:" and the boy in return was put to do all the dirty work aft. He scrubbed the deck, cleaned the brass-work, slushed the mast, painted the boats, but I cannot find that the captain ever taught him navigation. In fact, the father of a midshipman paid the fare of a first-class passenger to enable his boy to live in a dirty, gloomy berth, to eat the ship's bitter bad food, and do for nothing what the ship-owners would have been obliged to pay wages to get others to do.

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Five youngsters were sitting at table ; a narrow table that you got rid of when you had done with it, by thrusting it up the stanchions it slid on. The mess boy was a bright, intelligent lad, dressed in the garb of the man-of-war. They had lighted the lamp to eat by, and were talking all at once when I walked in. Their tea had been brought to them in hook-pots, and they were drinking it out of pannikins ; a kid of boiled fresh meat smoked in the middle of the table, biscuits and soft tack were scattered about. As I was not in uniform, which merely consisted of a badge cap and a few brass buttons on a jacket, one of them who had his knife in the mess kid cried out—

“Hallo there, you ! You’re out of your course, my lad !”

“Am I ?” said I, and stepping round to him I dropped my bag and put my hands to his cheeks, and moved his head firmly to and fro so as to make him look like a fool, but not to hurt him. And this done, the other youngsters being silent and staring at me, I exclaimed : “I am third mate, though I don’t claim to be more than midshipman. Bear a hand with your supper,” and I walked to my bunk beside which I saw my chest, and placed my bag in it, and feeling a bit hungry I said :

“Any grub left in that kid ?”

“Plenty, sir,” was the answer of a lad who reminded me of Rawdon.

The mess boy brought me a plate and I began to eat. I made a meal, and whilst I fed I talked to the youngsters. They were all first voyagers, in brand new clothes. Three of them sons of clergymen, and the fourth had a major-general, and the fifth had a solicitor for a father ; I liked their looks ; they were refined and well-bred, and spoke in the accents of the young gentleman, and I was pleased that we were few, for in one voyage of this ship we carried twelve of these ocean-gems, and some of them were old hands who

knew the ropes, and wore red noses, and decorated their faces with the flowers of the grog-can, and often our berth was hell afloat.

The boys told me they had had a bad time down Channel. It blew hard after the tug left them, and afterwards it was a ceaseless putting of the ship about. But I knew that Bowser was not a man to be stopped by the wind. He would look it in the eye and defy it. He would lean away from it on a taut bowline, and find a favorable gale in the slant of its thunderous pinion.

How exquisite as a piece of mechanism to those who understand it are the yards, masts, rigging, and gear of a full-rigged sailing ship! For *here* is seamanship. But you have none in the engine-room. The engines are hidden in the lean tank that sweeps along to the thrash of her propeller, and the shovels of the stokers do not make the music of the windlass.

I was a bit moody, and sat in my bunk and smoked a pipe. A young fellow cannot leave his home, even though he is used to going to sea, without a little depression of spirits at the start. The excitement of my journey with Miss Stuart had drawn off my thoughts from the strangeness of our encounter; and now I was thinking, whilst I watched two or three of the youngsters light fine new meerschaum pipes and try to smoke, and seem to like it, that our meeting was not a coincidence, but a miracle made so by the vision of my childhood, and I felt superstitious, and wondered if my mother had been right when she said that Belle's life was to be mingled with mine in some inscrutable way.

I went on deck to suck out my pipe: the evening was a glowing twilight, and the stars shone in the squares of the ratlines. The cuddy was alight with oil lamps, and I stood in the recess under the break of the poop admiring the familiar scene of sparkling mirror, and flashing crystal, and hanging flowers. Pale and beautiful lights, deli-

cate as the moonshine of fairyland, flushed the face of the waters, and on them reposed the towering shadows of men-of-war and the lesser heights of merchantmen. Somewhere a band of music was playing: I caught the air and hummed it in time as I smoked. It was "Cheer up, Sam!" There was not much exhilaration of spirit to be got out of that distant music. Bands when distant are not sweet. I looked at the men-of-war, and then I glanced at our own heights, climbing in great crosses and ever-pointing spars to the sky. This was the eve of a long voyage, and already I was sick of it. Did not I know what lay before me: the dreary watch, the cold wash-down, the drizzling rain and the fiery hail-shot of the gale-hard squall, the months of pork, the months of salt beef—I felt ill. What was the outlook? I might serve faithfully in the Merchant Service till my hair was as white as the salt in a ship's wake, and if as commander I was guilty of but a single error of judgment, my certificate would be suspended, my berth would be lost to me, the owners would turn their backs upon me, and I should be forced into the ranks of starving, stumping, tramping master mariners who have no work to do, to whom no work will be given unless they ask it of another master, who is not a mariner, and who lives in the most unpopular house in England. Had I been sent into the Navy—and my father had means enough to have strained a point—I should have been serving, not an owner who would ruthlessly dismiss me after years in his employ for a single blunder—but the state, the country, the throne. I should be making my way towards a pension. Out yonder in those men-of-war were captains and lieutenants whom the Admiralty would by-and-by be unable to make use of; so they would convert them into rear admirals, and give them the interest of thirty thousand pounds to live upon; and they would live in good style, and belong to good clubs, and

write letters about the Navy in public prints, not knowing what else to do.

I spent a bad quarter of an hour in that recess, and then a man came down off the poop whose company was like to make me more miserable still. He was the second mate, and his name was Curling. He was a dark, gloomy young man with a stoop, a yellow face, and dead black eyes. I had served with him before, and had never known him capable of a moment's happiness or pleasure.

"When did you come on board?" said he.

I told him.

"Well, here we are outward bound!" he exclaimed.

"I don't need to be told that."

"But it's always being outward bound in this life," he continued; "the moment we are born we are outward bound. Don't make any mistake, you can't shift your course, you're headed straight from the womb of life to the womb of earth, and growl you may, but go you must!"

"What sort are the passengers?" I asked, watching the sheen in his dead black eyes, whilst he lighted his pipe at the little bull's eye which illuminated the clock under the cuddy front.

"Few, thank God! but beastly unfit. The likeliest is Mrs. Trevor, who told me that she's eighty-five, with all her faculties."

"And she goes to sea, possessing all her faculties?" said I.

"I like to talk to her," said the second mate. "I'm interested in very old people who are nearing their end. I asked her this morning in a short chat if she considered herself saved. And she answered so much so, that she had nothing left to do but pray for me."

"Did you give her a tract?" I asked.

"I had none upon me, but I have plenty in my chest. I'll give you a few to-morrow for the midshipmen's quarters."

“Ay, something smelling of blue ruin —”

As I said this I saw in the corner of my eye somebody coming up the steerage ladder. I looked, and beheld Belle Stuart. I was visible to her in the light of the lamps, and without hat or shawl she at once came to the cuddy door. The melancholy idiot of a second mate might, with half a glance, have guessed from her approach and accost that we were friends, and moved off. Not he; he leaned against the side of the recess and sucked his pipe, and stared and listened.

I never read descriptions of pretty women, and can't write them. But I just want to say here that I had not before seen Belle with her head uncovered and without a jacket, and now she leaned in the cuddy door, the picture of a sweet English girl; her hair shone with the light, and I never met any girl with a prettier figure.

“I think I shall find my berth very comfortable, Mr. Longmore,” said she. “I wish we had started. We shall be a small family party at the cabin table. Will you be one of us?”

“No,” I answered.

“He's only third mate,” croaked the second mate.

“And what are you?” she asked.

“I am the second mate.”

“Why should a second mate sit at the table if the third mate mayn't?” she inquired.

“It is the custom of the sea,” he answered gloomily.

“One of a lot of bad customs, no doubt.”

And I observed that he did not seem struck by her beauty or in any way engaged by her manners or appearance. Had this man walked off I might have enjoyed a quiet chat with her: he ought to have seen that she wanted to talk to me. We thoroughly neglected him, and admired together the fairy scene of lights motionless on board the ships, of lights twinkling upon the shore, of fibers of silver under a large trembling star here and there

in the smooth velvet surface, and right abreast of us, backed by the visionary coast, moved a large phantasmal ship in full sail. But nothing would do ; the second mate continued to lean and smoke.

Presently Belle said she would go and write up her dairy, and left me, and much disgusted by the imbecility of the melancholy loon with the dead black eyes, I went below to see to my bed and affairs for the night.

CHAPTER XII.

THE YOUNG IDEA AFLOAT.

THE dawn whitened the stars out of the sky, and the water brimmed pale as milk from the land about Ram's cliff to our anchored ships. The shore from Penlee Point to Drake's Island grew slowly into the beauty of morning, with its refreshment of dew and sparkling silver sunbeams, and the air of heaven was sweet as the cream of the country.

At six o'clock a pretty breeze was blowing from the north-east right out of Catwater, and was scented with the perfumes of the moors. "All hands!" All hands in my time meant everybody, excepting the passengers, on board ship. They have ceased to yell "All hands!" It is the romantic age of Steam! What is the good of roaring "all hands to a steam winch and a steam-windlass? The clank of the engine-room bell has silenced the silver music of the boatswain's pipe.

We were lying in Jennycliff Bay, and needed no tug with a north east wind to make our way past the western end of the breakwater into the wide breast of the Channel. Whilst the dawn was brightening into morning the men broke out the anchor to the noise of that pleasant chanty "Shanandoah, I love your daughter!" the prettiest melody that ever the pulse of the pawl kept time to. The ships of war and the ships of peace floated out in color and light into the day, and I noticed while I listened to the music, a pearly pinnon of sail slipping past the beautiful land of Mount Edgecumbe, where the foliage sips the salt, and I thought, with a great heigho! in my heart, of the days

when I chased the butterfly in the fields of old Bouville.

A ship with single topsails, her sides painted like a frigate, with quarter galleries and stern windows, and a flying jib-boom—so far ahead of the bows that where the grateful sail is hoisted it seems a star, and to dwell apart—this ship is no longer to be seen getting her anchor, and, without blushes, baring her white breasts to the kisses of the wind. Whoever saw us get under weigh that morning must have enjoyed the picture. The topsails were loosed, head-sails hoisted, the anchor rose like a shark out of the blue brine. "Sheet home! Man the topsails halliards, loose the t'gallant sails!" And a hand at the wheel was there; and the *Glendower* with stately motion—because some ships were proud and obeyed imperiously—rounded with her head for Penlee Point, and we rippled on our course to the great Australian continent.

You heard the sounds of guns ashore. A man-of-war was getting under weigh. She was the *Chesapeake* frigate, and I found time to watch her make sail. But it was not making sail according to the merchantman's reckoning. It was a brilliant leaping of her into the fulness of foam-white cloths from truck to water-way—in a breath or two—perfect, magical! They had the men and could do it. But how well done it was! Lord! how proud I would feel of my country when I have seen an English man-of-war make sail with foreigners looking on, or some of them starting to follow! The fabrics of the deep are no longer beautiful. In my time, even the little collier was instinct with the spirit of the romance which had come to it in unbroken story from the days of the mariner of Hackluyt. The sea cherished her, and made her sparkle; the wind sang the old song in her old shrouds, and to the loving eye she blew past, and even she—ay, even she—was a memory of beauty.

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A man will grow hungry in pulling and hauling of a fine autumn morning on board ship when the sweep of breeze shines like the brine-whitened planks, and I was glad when breakfast-time came round. We had washed down, we had coiled down, and the port watch was sent below. Already we were clear of Plymouth Sound, and making with a steady helm for the mid-channel course. The frigate was in our wake, with a stump-ended merchantman or two on her quarter. We were beginning to throw the seas off our bows with the rattling slash of hail on glass, and alongside on either hand ran marbled veins of water, and the furrow throbbed, and twinkled, and flashed, and trembled like beds of herring lifting to the light.

I entered the midshipmen's berth, and the boy in the man-of-war's man suit followed me with a dish of frizzling brown steaks, and when he had sat this down upon the table, he sped like the wind, and returned with a kidful of potatoes boiled in their jackets. He made another rush, and brought us hook-pots of hot coffee. We had soft tack. Who would give sailors sea biscuits half an hour out of harbor? With plenty of mustard this was a good breakfast.

There were three youngsters in my watch, and I helped them to the food. One was a little dark chap of a sallow complexion and an expression of intellect, and he had half-closed merry eyes.

"How d'ye like it so far, my lads?" said I, whilst the four of us sat sawing away at our tin dishes.

"I don't think I shall like it, sir," said one of them, "I would have been glad to go home if I could have left the ship at Plymouth."

"He's thinking of his sister," said the merry-eyed boy.

"And you laugh at him for that?" I exclaimed.

"He don't think of her, I expect, when he's at home," said the merry-eyed boy.

"Have you a sister?" I inquired.

"Six, sir," he answered.

"A sister's a sacred relation," said I to the woeful little midshipman; "but if she gets married she will have children; if she's a good woman she will be able to think of nothing but her home, husband, and family, and relations are so very queer in this world, it might happen if you called upon her she might wish you hadn't come. Cheer up! Within a year you will be at home again—a man! Think of that!"

They grinned. The ship was slightly hauled to the wind, and as the breeze freshened whilst we drove along, our scuttles took the flash of the living brine, and with a sucking gurgle the dim, green radiance of the sea was in our cabin. At noon that day the land was out of sight in a windy haze, and we were rushing down channel under topgallant sails. The sun lurked with a wintry eye in the thickness, but the horizon lay well open, and there was no obligation with a good lookout, as there is in these days of steam-tramps and no lookouts, to run something down and go to pieces over it. The frigate hung like a lonely iceberg far astern of us. When I went on the poop the scene was bright and gallant, something within the memory of many who may read these lines. The passengers were on deck, the sailors were getting their dinner forward, the body of the ship was framed in yeast as she sped, and she took the long lines of graceful, snow-white seas as an impassioned girl leaps in a theater to the measure of her dance. All the passengers were on deck, and I counted twelve. One was a queer little man with a raised simpering face: he seemed to ask mercy of everything he looked at. I heard the Honorable Mrs. Trevor, the old woman of eighty-five, before I saw her. Her voice was as harsh as the stroke of the hammer when the boiler plate is flanged. She sat in a chair, wrapped up in shawls, and talked to the captain who was walking on the quarter, and she could be heard all over the ship. I guessed she was

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one of those old women who take liberties on the merit of their age, and who fancy they are important, not because they are distinguished, or handsome, but because they are old. Others were a clumsily-built old man, called Sir Thomas Knight, with his wife and daughter, and Miss Parker, one of those ladies who tell you they sail in ships in search of health, but in reality they seek a husband, and as the voyage is long, and the calms frequently tedious, if the hook is well baited, a husband may be caught. Her front hair was a singular bed of minute curls, and in her quest after health she had attained, I should say, the comfortable age of forty, when the bones are set, and you cease to have growing pains, and like your comforts.

I have said I was in the chief mate's watch, and this gentleman was named Pinch, a sprawling, simple, homely fellow, with this peculiarity: that he never would suffer his shoes to be blacked, nor black them himself, and he walked in rust until he got ashore.

It was strange to find nobody seasick, but to be sure the passengers had beaten down Channel, and two-thirds of them were old hands. Three youngsters in their brand-new clothes loafed to leeward, where the main rigging came down hard by the poop ladder. And just then there was nothing to do, nor would I worry the poor little devils by teaching them how to make knots, and explaining the use of the marline spike, and teaching them how to flemish-coil a rope. There was plenty of time. The green water of the Channel was under our bows, and Australia a desperate long way off.

I saw Belle Stuart talking to an airy-fairy sort of looking gentleman, whose head lay backward and floated jauntily off his neck. He wore a galloping silver horse in his spotted cravat. His waistcoat was red and his coat green. His laugh was as loud as Mrs. Trevor's voice. He was talking with excited pantomime to the young lady,

and I did not then know that the middle-aged woman, with fine eyes and a pickled onion for a face in a bonnet, who was looking into the compass right aft, was his wife.

When Belle saw me she left her companion instantly, and came right down, which was not a little embarrassing, for the globe-like eyes of Bowser were close aboard, and just to windward was the mate, and, like the man at the wheel, I was not supposed to talk to the passengers. She wore a black straw hat and a black jacket. She shook hands with me, and the little midshipmen stared at her like sheep at a dog.

"We haven't met before," she exclaimed. "What have you been doing all this morning, Mr. Longmore?"

I was blushing all over my face, because I saw the captain and the chief mate looking at me, and I did not know what to do.

"It is watch and watch in this ship," said I, in a stuttering, foolish way. "I am in the port watch," I continued, looking in the direction of the captain, "and at eight bells this morning," and here I looked in the direction of the mate, "the port watch was sent below."

"What do sailors mean by watches?" she asked.

"Watches are divisions of a ship's company," I replied.

"What sort of cabin do you sleep in?"

"A dungeon," I answered. "We are six. We might have been seven. Once we were twelve."

"One reads a good deal about midshipmen's berths in books," exclaimed Belle; "I should like to see yours."

"It's the Navy midshipmen you read about," I answered. "We have no right to call ourselves midshipmen. We are snobs and impostors. The ship-owners force us to imitate the Navy uniform, and I remember a little midshipman, belonging to a frigate up in China, coming over our ship's side, and scarcely saluting me with a jerk of his thumb at the bottom button of his waistcoat, so much did he despise and scorn me as a sham."

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"I could have told him who was the sham," said Belle.
"When will you take me into the midshipmen's berth?"

"I must obtain leave," I replied.

"Aren't you an officer in this ship?"

"About as much as one of those little chaps who are staring at you."

"But a mate's an officer."

This made me laugh. The captain's pace as he measured the planks was growing faster and faster, and the easy-going disjointed mate worked and tumbled at the poop-rail with constant glances at me.

"I'm afraid," said I, "Miss Stuart, that it's not considered the right thing for young ladies to talk to us sailors at sea on board ship."

"What nonsense!"

"It is the law of the sea."

"I should think a passenger has a right to speak to anybody. I will tell Captain Bowser that we were playmates, and that our dear mothers were acquainted, and that I like to talk to you."

With a little color in her cheeks she looked at the captain, who by this time, however, could stand it no longer. He came to a halt and roared out:

"Mr. Longmore."

"Sir?"

"Step aft here with those young gentlemen."

"What odious tyranny!" exclaimed the girl. "But he's not my captain, and I will talk to him," and she leaned against the rail to watch us. But not for long was she alone, for the gentleman whose head floated off his neck, and whose waistcoat was red, immediately made for her side on the legs of a skater.

"Take those young gentlemen aloft, and teach them how to climb, Mr. Longmore," said the captain. Show them the yards and ropes, and explain things. This poop isn't a nursery for boys to run about on, dragging 'orses

and carts." The influence of the hawse-pipe sometimes betrayed Bowser, but on the whole he managed very well.

I told the lads to follow me, and sprang into the weather-mizzen rigging, and when I was as high as the futtock shrouds those boys were staring up at me from the sheer-pole.

"Come along," said I. "Show the road, Boyton. It's easier than walking."

And they began to crawl and to hook ratline by ratline. Old Mrs. Trevor was staring wildly at them, and suddenly she cried out in a frightful shriek—

"Captain, those boys will fall overboard! You'll not be able to stop your ship to pick them up."

"They are here to be made sailors of," I heard Captain Bowser answer, for, as the old woman was deaf, he was obliged to sing out.

The boys arrived at the futtock rigging, but were too nervous to gain the top by it. So I made them squeeze through the lubber's hole, and began to talk to them, whilst they held on very tightly. I endeavored to reassure them, and was in no hurry to take them higher. Our glorious Nelson used to pity nervous little midshipmen when they first went aloft, and invited them to race him, to give them heart, and when they met in the top, he would laughingly ask them to consider how easy it was, and he would tell them that a boy was greatly to be pitied who could see difficulty or danger in climbing the rigging. When presently we got into the topmast shrouds the old lady below yelled out—

"Captain, don't let that big fellow take those boys any higher. I'll not stop on deck to see it," and as the captain took no notice of her, she opened an umbrella and hid herself under it, and looked, from my elevation, like a scorched toad-stool. But there was too much wind for umbrellas, and in a minute, with a loud yell, a slap of

breeze fresh in the windward roll took it, and blew it inside out.

We got into the cross-trees and made a little crowd, some of us holding on tightly enough to squeeze the tar out of the ropes. The yards were braced forward, we carried no cross-jack, and I saw Belle looking up at us from the side of the red waistcoat, whose laugh was loud and frequent, and unshared. I instructed the boys in the names of the mast, rigging, and sails, and I noticed that Boyton, the lad with the merry eyes, often looked at the sea as though he found something novel and beautiful in the spectacle from that altitude.

I recalled my own imaginations and enthusiasm, and asked him what he thought of the show.

"How little they look, but how steady they race!" said he.

"What do you see besides the steady race of those waters?" I asked, and watched him whilst he slowly gazed round.

His eyes were ardent; his face had an eager expression; you thought of a young eagle about to launch itself into middle air.

His gaze came to mine, and, perhaps, interpreting my smile—for the sea circle ran naked to the leaning gleam of frigate astern in the windy haze—he answered:

"I see Captain Vanderdecken."

The other lads strained their sight.

"Is he far off?" said I.

"There he is?" he exclaimed, pointing abeam to windward, "and he keeps pace with us. And can't you see how his strange little ship, with the tall poop and low bows, heels over in foam, and shows ancient guns upon her decks, and the figure of an old man with a white beard with folded arms, who watches us scornfully."

He continued to point, and the little chap's fervor and imagination actually caused me to look in the direction he indicated.

"You come to sea to learn how to write romances," said I. "How old are you?"

"Fifteen next Febuary, sir."

Clearly a young dreamer, and many boys are dreamers, and the hours they pass in their dreams are gladder, more triumphant, more gorgeous with pageantry, and painted halls and courts of Imagination, than ever they are likely to live through afterwards. Why was this lad nervous in going aloft at the start? Possibly he suffered from that sort of disease of the nerves which is called brains. But I doubt if there was a chief mate afloat in my time who would have understood this, and a cabbage would have mastered the suggestion as rapidly as Bowser.

The pulses of a man beat strongly aloft when a ship sails as ours was, all aslant, rolling through it with steady risings to windward in thunder and snow. I have not in my mind the dirty, worthless, godless sailor, who goes growling aloft with the slush-pot, and sees nothing but slush, and is without understanding for anything higher than slush. Plenty there were of his sort, literal dogs, soulless skins, whose hearts were dry, and the mechanism of their thoughts ran with the sickening tameness of the rattle of the winch. But sailors there were who could dangle aloft and be visited by the full spirit of the mighty scene. They have spoken to me of the mysterious drummers which beat the low thunderous roll upon the curved and stirless canvas. They have spoken to me of the voices of the saints singing heart-shaking anthems in the rigging, and I did not laugh at them, because I, too, have heard the mysterious drummers aloft, and listened to the singing of the saints in the shrouds.

I was in no hurry to "lay" down with the youngsters. It was not very cold, and my watch on deck was passing. I saw Miss Belle walking with Captain Bowser, who occasionally looked aloft, and I could not help patting my pensive bosom, and whispering, "Meaning me, sir." The

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boys were getting heart, and asked questions, and all of a sudden Bowser shouted out—

“I’m going to clew up the garns’l. Stow it with the lads, Mr. Longmore, and I’ll send an ordinary seaman aloft to help you.”

Two were plenty for that sail, but the skipper was in a paternal mood, and the boys were to be instructed, though I had not signed articles for *that* job. The mate sang out, a few sailors rolled aft, the halliards were let go, the yard came down with a run, all the passengers looked up, the clews of the sails rose in pinions, the braces were hauled taut, and a young Irish seaman came trotting aloft. The lads were of no use, and I told them to observe how we picked up the sail, got the leech along the yard, passed the gaskets, and made a harbor stow of the bunt.

When this was ended I felt I had been mastheaded long enough, and we descended the rope ladders, and sprang like men upon the white planks of the poop, and the three brand-new little midshipmen glanced about them with an air of importance.

Scarcely was I on deck when Belle ran across to me from the captain’s side, to my intolerable embarrassment. Again I colored to the roots of my hair. She could not but wonder, but she had yet to learn that at sea sailors are not allowed to walk about with young ladies when the captain and mate are looking on.

“The captain says there is no objection to my taking a peep at the midshipmen’s quarters after lunch,” said she, looking with a wonderful arch and winning simplicity into my face.

“I shall be very glad,” I exclaimed, with a glance at the captain; “but there is little to see.”

“I also asked him,” she continued, “what possible right he had in stopping two people who knew each other when little children from walking about the ship.”

I broke into a laugh, and asked her to tell me what he

had replied. "He coughed a good deal," she answered, turning her head to view him, "and grew red, and said captains had great powers, and if they hadn't it would be a bad thing for the passengers, particularly for single young ladies who were placed under their charge."

Just at that moment old Mrs. Trevor, who had been staring at us intently, shrieked out :

"Come here, you tall boy, and tell me how you dared take those little boys up in the rigging !"

At this the gentleman in the red waistcoat, whose name I soon found out was Lepper—Captain Horatio Lepper—set up his throat in a loud, unmeaning laugh. I took no notice whatever of the old lady, who was blind of an eye, and had a beak for a nose, and was generally dressed in faded garments, dull gloves, dim gowns, ribbons which seemed to have been washed too often, and went on talking with Belle.

"Come here !" shrieked the old woman again. "Don't you hear me call you ?"

"Mr. Longmore," cried Captain Bowser.

I immediately left Miss Stuart and stepped up to him.

"You have sailed with me before, and I presume you know the discipline of shipboard ?" said he.

"Certainly I do, sir."

"You will see that you do not talk with Miss Stuart during your watch on deck."

"Very good, sir."

"I told her that at four o'clock you would take her below, and show her the midshipmen's quarters, which she seems interested in," he exclaimed, regarding me as sternly as the glassy nature of his large protruding eyes permitted. "The chief officer will accompany her," he added. "She is under my charge, sir."

"Am I to answer that old lady if she shrieks to me, sir ?"

"No, but I'll put a stop to it." And here he began to

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swear at the old woman under his breath, and I walked to the forward end of the poop, smiling at Belle, and deaf to another shriek from Mrs. Trevor. At this moment the luncheon bell rang in the cabin, and in a very few minutes the poop was a clear deck.

Mr. Pinch, the chief officer, who was walking to windward, called and asked me if I was engaged to be married to Miss Stuart.

"No, sir."

"She seems devilish fond of you—can't keep her hands off you, and mind you, a proper party, as tidy a piece of goods without being gaudy as ever I met at sea or on shore," said the mate. "You must have kept company a good deal to have got her so fond of you."

"I don't know that she's fond of me, sir," I exclaimed; "and as to keeping company——" but here I broke off, for what would have been the good of telling such a man as this mate the story of that strange little romance?

"You will observe that the mate did not go down to lunch. No; he remained on deck, to keep a lookout until the captain relieved him. And I who was third mate, and twenty years of age, was not considered a fit and responsible person to look after the ship! Hence I scorned my title, and always spoke of myself as a midshipman.

Mr. Pinch was polite enough to ask me to walk with him, which was very unusual. Captains and mates at sea lead lonesome lives, and escaped by every artifice from the obligation of talking to one another. Their isolation is that of the pin in the cribbage board. In the forecabin you have men to talk with, and there is plenty to listen to and learn. But aft if you are a mate, you are scarcely a man; you live the self-contained life of the prisoner. Is it surprising that ladies should find sailors shy? I am writing of the men of my day. I do not know what they call a mate now. I am ignorant of his duties, and am merely surprised when I hear that he is an Englishman.

"If you are going to follow the sea for a living," said Mr. Pinch, "I would not be in a hurry to get married, if I were you." He was fresh from home and sentimental.

"I have not thought of getting married, sir."

"A man marries a beautiful girl," continued the mate, "spends half his savings in planting her in a comfortable little house, then has to leave her for a twelvemonth's voyage. Is that good enough? Not by the length of a chalk line from here to the man at the wheel. But it isn't twelve months, it may be three years. It worked into three years with me once. And is it fair to a wife, and is it fair to a man? He comes home, and finds that his wife's gone off, and sold his furniture. Is that good enough? Not by the length of a chalk line from here to the man at the wheel."

This chalk line was merely an illustration that lay loose in his mind, for we were close to the man at the wheel, when he spoke it the second time. But original illustrations are hard to invent, and men think that wit lies in comparisons. He continued to talk in this strain about marriage, and indeed appeared as though he had fallen under the influence of the second mate. I took the liberty of asking him who Mrs. Trevor was, and he answered that he believed she was a widow, whose brother was a lord. "She has an income of three thousand a year, and land and houses in Australia, the captain told me," said he, "and a house of her own in Hyde Park."

"She'd like to take command of this ship, sir."

He applied a strong name to her, and, finding that he had fallen into a fit of moodiness, often directing his eyes across the foaming waters in the direction of old England I left him, and walked the lee side of the deck alone. I heard the rattle of crockery in the cuddy, Mrs. Trevor's loud shriek, Captain Lepper's louder laugh. All this while the ship was thrashing through it at about twelve knots. She was under her two top-gallant sails; but I guessed we

should be easing her of her main course before long. The brine was sheeting out to leeward with lightning-white brightness; there was a note of storm in the minstrelsy aloft. But what could be sweeter than the smooth rushing of the ship, her steady rise on the green slant, her slow and solemn falling along—you are not sensible of it, so regular was the rhythm of the sea.

A little while before the passengers came on deck the mate ordered the mainsail to be hauled up, and in a minute or two the clew-garnets were manned, and the eager yells of the wind, as it flashed to the bulwark rail, and split in the rigging, was filled with a rough music of fo'scle throats. This sea-harp hangs mute. Its soul has fled. You get no songs on board the steamer, for there is nothing to pull. The romance of the age is in the donkey-engine, and the snorts of the "labor-saving" beast will some day no doubt be made "poetry" of.

While the men were on the yard some of the people left the luncheon-table, and among the first to arrive was Belle Stuart. I was "standing by," full of the business of that furling job, ready to rush to a brace, or any other gear that needed handling. The girl came up to me at once.

"What are they doing to the ship?" she asked.

"Now," thought I, "if old Bowser arrives, there will be a difficulty."

"The men are shortening sail," I answered, eagerly glancing for a sign of the captain's head in the companion. "How am I to say it? I don't like to say it—but the captain has commanded me not to talk to you or any other of the passengers in my watch on deck."

"It is ridiculous tyranny!" she exclaimed; but he will keep his word, I hope, and allow me to peep at the midshipmen's quarters at eight bells, as he calls it."

At that moment there rose through the companion-hatch the figure of Mrs. Trevor, shored up, and in other ways supported by Captain Bowser. She had but one eye, but

she could see through a plank with it, and when she and Bowser gained the deck she saw me, and cried out : "Take me to that tall young man, captain."

Bowser looked as black as Egypt when he perceived me, as he supposed, talking to Miss Stuart while such work as furling the mainsail was going on. But the old lady was under weigh for me on her own account, and he could not stand by and see her capsize ; he took her by one arm, approached, and we made a pretty little party.

"Is it because I'm an old woman that you won't speak to me?" howled Mrs. Trevor. "What did you mean by talking the poor little boys up the ladder at the risk of their lives?"

"He was obeying my orders, madam," said Bowser.

"He never answered when I spoke to him," she shrieked. "What's his name, that he treats me with contempt because I'm an old woman?"

The captain said something I did not catch in a voice of remonstrance to Miss Stuart, and looking at him as though she was surprised, she gave me a smile and walked off.

In the next breath the mate sang out to me, and I fled across the deck to the weather-main brace. "Well," thought I to myself, as I heard the old lady howl after me, "if that old woman don't prove crumpets enough to last out the old man six new silk hats, I'll go to sea next voyage on the top crust of a halfpenny loaf."

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR QUARTERS ARE VISITED.

BELLE STUART told some of the passengers that she was going into the 'tween-decks to look at the midshipmen's quarters, and so it got wind, and, incredible to relate, old Mrs. Trevor insisted upon joining her. This was at eight bells, and whilst the chimes were snapping into the wind Belle came along the deck to me, and said, with her face full of light, and color, and amusement: "Now, I presume, we are at liberty to converse, and you will let me see your quarters. What a strange thing is the discipline of a ship! People ought to be able to talk to one another whenever they please. We do not take a passage to be made slaves of."

Just then we heard old Mrs. Trevor. Her penetrating voice rang along the deck as she came rolling alongside the captain, grasping his arm, with a lavender kid glove, half off her hand.

"It will be the greatest treat," she was saying. "I am very much interested in the little boys, and in the great big fellow, too, but he's afraid of old women."

"You will never be able to reach the 'tween decks," said the captain.

"Can't I go down in a chair?" she squawked. "If I can get down that ladder"—meaning the companion-steps—"I could climb down a chimney."

"If she gets into our berth," said I to Belle, "we shall never get her out of it."

But the old lady of eighty-five insisted. A crowd of

passengers collected. The thing grew into a great senseless laugh when Captain Lepper and others asked leave to join our party.

"Mr. Pinch," said the captain, scarcely able to hold his face, "kindly accompany the ladies to the midshipmen's quarters, and be careful that Mrs. Trevor does not hurt herself."

The chief mate looked very much annoyed, and said something to the second mate who now had charge. And I have no doubt that Curling made some reply that did not improve the mate's spirits. The captain walked right away aft as if to shove clear of it all. The jacks, thinking something unusual was happening, dodged looks at us from the sides of the galley and the longboat. Since Mrs. Trevor insisted upon visiting our berth, there was no reason why the whole of the passengers should not descend, and Captain Lepper went, and Mr. Goring, with his simpering, lifting leer, and Miss Parker, who could not guess perhaps what might not turn up in the shape of a husband even in the midshipmen's berth. And we were also accompanied by the ship's surgeon, Mr. Candy, who resembled the description of Tracy Tupman in "Pickwick."

It was a perilous undertaking for the old woman, but she yelled defiance and determination, in reply to the mate's representations. With some labor she was got down the poop-ladder on to the quarter deck.

"Where do the boys live?" she cried.

"Down through that hole," answered the mate, pointing to a square hatch a little forward of the cuddy front, "You'll never reach the bottom alive, madam. Let me advise you——"

She stepped close to the hatch, Belle drew nigh, and so did Miss Parker. The ladder was almost, but not quite perpendicular. The descent would be scarcely easy to the young ladies with some one going first to help them, but an old woman of eighty-five! She could be lowered down,

she could be handed down, she could be thrown down, but she certainly could not crawl down. We all hoped that she would abandon her intention whilst she peered with her one eye into that shadowy square of hatch. Instead of which—"How am I to get down," she yelled, and stared about her fiercely, for she had the face of a witch.

I could not but admire her spirit, objectionable as her manners were. For such women, I thought, must have been the mothers of the generations who discovered continents for this country, and fought glorious battles by sea and land. It was the dog watch, and Mr. Pinch was growing impatient. He wanted to lie down in his cabin and smoke a pipe, and was in no humor to argue with an old lady, who was asking us to break her neck.

"Since you will, you must, mam," said he, and he then gave me certain instructions, and in a few minutes an ordinary seaman slid down the mizzen-stay with a tackle in his hand, the tail of which he made fast. The mizzen-stay was set up somewhere near the foot of the mainmast, and came low therefore, and there was plenty of line in the tackle for over-hauling. A chair was brought out of the cuddy, and the old lady bound in it. The block was then hooked to slings to which the old lady clung; the mate went below to steady and receive her, myself and some hands swayed away, and she shrieked so fearfully that a number of sailors came running aft, and the captain and remainder of the passengers came running forward to see what we were doing to her. We got her below in safety, and when she left the cabin chair we hauled it up and sent Belle and Miss Parker down by it, to spare them that up and down ladder.

The old lady blew hard with mingled fright and the gratification she felt in having had her way with us, and in a body, she in the thick of us, we dove into my quarters. A couple of midshipmen were lying in their bunks smoking. They started up, and did not know what

to do at sight of so many people all of a sudden. As we had nothing but our lower bunks to sit in, and as it was convenient to leave the chair where it was, I rolled a full barrel of butter to the table, and stood it on end, and throwing a coat over it, politely forced Mrs. Trevor to sit down.

I was a little ashamed that Belle should see our quarters. The slush lamp was burning and stunk, the bedding was tossed, every now and again the white sea flashed along the scuttles and eclipsed the tincture of the day. I did not like her to remark our forlorn display of tin dishes and cutlery, and our cask of moist sugar, our scarlet tins of preserved spuds.

"I shall be sick if I stop down here," cried out Captain Lepper, and he rushed on deck.

In a minute Mr. Goring sneaked out after him. Three little midshipmen came in, and grinned like niggers when they saw old Mrs. Trevor and the ladies.

"What a miserable cabin for officers of the ship to sleep in," said Belle.

Miss Parker smiled at the boys, two of whom were pretty enough to have pleased a more fastidious taste than hers.

"You should see the fo'scle," said the mate. "This is a mansion in Eaton Square compared to a sailor's lodging in the Whitechapel Road."

I could have informed him that he was telling the ladies a whopping lie, and our eyes met, but nothing more than a smile was exchanged.

"What do they give you to eat down here?" shrieked the old woman upon the barrel.

"Just the same as they give to the sailors." I answered.

"Oh! for shame, Mr. Pinch," she yelled, "that you should feed the sons of gentlemen as though they were common sailors."

"Good God! madam," he cried, losing self-control, "what have I got to do with it?"

"What's in that great brown cask there?" inquired the old lady, and all this while Belle's eyes, full of curiosity and disgust, were roaming over the narrow, gloomy interior, with its squally eclipse of scuttle and its stink of slush lamp amidships.

"Brown sugar," answered a midshipman.

"Do you like brown sugar, my dear?" asked the old lady, in a voice that was actually tender.

"Yes, in coffee," answered the midshipman, in a manly way. "And it's nice if you spread it on buttered biscuit."

"Boys will eat anything," said Miss Parker, smiling at the lad.

The old mother on the tub rolled her one eye round about us, and then broke out in a wailing way as though she had been Irish: "My poor boys, you're as dear and bright a set of lads as I ever met at sea, and Mr. Pinch there must treat you with the greatest kindness. Your mothers are thinking of you, but you are not thinking of them. But God is with us, and the prayers of good mothers are never unheard. I lost a grandson by drowning. He was like that shiny-haired boy in the bed there. He was in the Royal Navy and fell overboard." Tears bubbled into her eyes. "I am sorry for all boys at sea, and perhaps you'll speak to an old woman if she addresses you again."

"I am forbidden to speak to any one in my watch on deck," said I emphatically, in the presence of the chief mate, as I wanted this trouble put right.

"Do they pay you well?" said Miss Stuart, with sweet innocence, which had some mischievous reference, I think, to Pinch.

"On the contrary, it is we who pay," I answered.

"*You* receive wages," said Mr Pinch.

"Shall I state them, sir?" said I.

He looked stern. He held a master's certificate, and hoped for command in this employ next voyage.

"How much d'ye get?" asked old Mrs. Trevor.

"A pound a month," I answered.

"How much?" she yelled.

"A pound a month," I bawled.

"You wouldn't get a general servant for the money, Mr Pinch," howled the old woman from her barrel. "And how much do they give you, my dear?"

"A shilling a month," answered the lad.

"I think you've seen these quarters by this," said Mr. Pinch, beginning to shuffle his feet.

"Yes, I should like to go on deck," exclaimed Miss Parker, who saw no husband among the young men on a shilling a month down here.

"I shall be able to give a local habitation to you when I think of you in this ship," said Belle to me.

But our quarters had been inspected, and now the old lady was to be got on deck. Many groans accompanied this operation, and when she was sent aloft, she emerged through the hatch with a prolonged shriek like a locomotive out of a tunnel. We were not very careful about Miss Parker, but I tenderly saw to Belle, and then returned to my quarters, thankful that the company had left before the boy came in with our "supper."

Miss Stuart's visit had made me feel disgusted with the berth, and that disgust went into the whole sea life. Oh, she had been as a rose in that dark and slush-flavored cabin, and her sweet and charming presence had done no more than accentuate the barren conditions of the hardest life and the poorest out-look that a boy can choose. I grasped a stanchion and said to the lads: "Hang me!"—for I rarely swore—"is there never a man down here, that one of you should go and tell the ladies that you like buttered biscuit with moist sugar spread upon it! Am I at school again?"

But I was too old, too tall, and too strong, and, let me hope, too kind to play the bully. And, watched by the

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silent youngsters, I flung myself into my bunk and lighted a pipe, and cursed Belle's curiosity when I looked at our dirty old cabin, and reflected that she had seen it.

At two bells the boy came in with our supper ; hook-pots of ink-black tea, filled with yellow stalks and leaves like sea-weed. That was the gift of the galley-god ; the rest we had to make up for ourselves, and the boy had put some biscuit upon the table, and butter, salt as the orphan's tear, and pale remains of our feast at noon. Deep in truth was that saying of an old seaman to me : " That sailors would starve on the food they get, if it wasn't for the fresh air that God gives them."

Scarcely had we eaten and drunken, as George Borrow would say, when the chief steward came into our cabin. He carried a ham and some parcels.

" These here," says he, putting the thing down upon the table, " are to serve as a passing blow-out for you young gentlemen. They are sent by Mrs. Trevor, who hopes you'll enjoy them."

" Very well," said I. " I will thank the lady myself, and now you can clear out," for I did not like the man's familiar manner ; he was a waiter, he thought to give himself airs upon merits to which he had not the least claim. At sea, in the Merchant Service, a man is wary in intruding upon another man's quarters unless invited. The mate of a ship, if he entered the fore-castle, would in those days have been kicked and pummeled out of pure love. This steward having discharged his office was required to go, and he went, probably guessing that had the young gentlemen not been first voyagers, his departure would have been hastened by a black squall of shoes.

I opened the parcels ; one contained a quantity of almonds and raisins ; there were two large boxes of sweet-meats of the finest quality, evidently laid in by the old lady for friends in Sydney ; there was another parcel of sweet biscuits. We shared these things equally, and the

youngsters munched, and one of them said that the sweets made him feel as if he were at home. Thus do we make wrong judgments of our fellow-creatures. I had hated that old lady, with her fierce, screeching voice and rude address, and she had risked her neck to see how uncomfortable we were, and the heart of a mother slowly wagged in her lean old breast of eighty-five.

It is not every ship's captain who would sell an old lady a ham on the eve of a voyage that was to last perhaps four months, yet it is certain that Mrs. Trevor purchased the ham for us, and the biscuits, and the raisins.

This was our first day out, as it is called, that is from Plymouth, and it had not been wanting in life. There was to come more life of another kind into it, for in that first dog-watch it came on to blow hard. A high sea, flickering like serpents' tongues with the shearing blast, charged us out of the haze, which was red and dangerous with sunset. All hands were called up to snug the ship down. It was an old-time job clean gone out of date. What would be the good of describing it? The youngsters were of no use aloft, and some ordinary seamen helped me to close reef the mizzen-topsail. In these times we carried single sails, as they do in the Navy still, and some merchantmen have looked like frigates in their full-bosomed dignity of cloths, and the first ship I was in was three times saluted by as many merchantmen, who "dipped" to us, courteously imagining the pennant which they could not see.

I bestrid the weather-mizzen-topsail-yardarm. It blew with the edge of a saw. The ocean was a magnificent picture of chaotic shapes, forming and dissolving, roaring and sweating, sending, as their heads burst, volcanic upheavals of spray into the lurid air. The ship was quarrelling fiercely through it, sinking to her scuppers, rising to above her sheathing, bowing her figure-head to the salt and shrieking dazzle, stooping her stern till her taffrail

seemed flush with her mad white rush of wake, which blew to pieces a little way off, the foam of it stretching in an acre to leeward. Good to watch was the lightning flash of the brine, striking the bow, rushing into white smoke aloft, slinging into a splendor of prisms and crystals and stars high above the forecastle into the distant sea.

It blew hard that night, and kept all the company quiet below. Our quarters had made Captain Lepper seasick, and when I went down aft shortly after midnight to see that all was right, I heard him swearing at his wife for not getting up and helping him. A berth is a bedroom, and a bedroom holds some queer secrets, and you must be prepared to wonder; but who would have believed the bland and gentlemanly Lepper, of the loud unmeaning laugh, capable of swearing at his wife when he thought nobody was listening!

The little knight was ill right aft, otherwise down here was pretty quiet, saving the screechings and groanings of bulkheads and hidden timbers in labor. And in the air seemed the smell of the lazarette, a part of the hold under the sick knight's berth, where they kept the cuddy stores. I reported all right below to the chief officer; the captain was on deck, tramping alone to and fro abreast of the wheel. We were in the mouth of the British Channel—a populous tract of waters; side lights were not insisted on as they now are; a man would think it enough to shout “port or starboard your helm” to an approaching ship, and snatch out the binnacle lamp, and dangle it over the rail. That was side light enough for him, and perhaps for the other who showed no light at all. Sometimes in the thickness we would see a dark shadow leaning and lurching past, but a red light would be faint in the spume, and a green light hidden.

At two bells the mate said to me, “Go forward, and see if our side lights are burning brightly.”

The water was flying freely over the weather bow, and it

gleamed with the sea glow as it fled. It was up to the knees in the waist to leeward, and the scuppers gasped and gurgled like sleeping negroes. I got upon the forecastle, and spoke to the look-out; saw that the lamps showed a brave light, and then walked right into the eyes on to the heel of the bowsprit to get a view of the ocean ahead. The sea was pouring in white thunder from each shouldering stoop of the gale-driven bows; and I found it hard to use my sight, which was very good; the flying wet made me look through tears, and the ghastly lightning of the foam below brought the night black as the walls of hell to the ship. Whilst I stared all in a minute my name was called in a shrill voice from the bowsprit.

"There's something right ahead," swept that treble past my ear in a piercing cry of terror.

Not instantly did I see it, neither did the lookout man. The shrill voice cried again: "We shall be into it!" and then I saw it; a black mass, a hill of motionless dye.

"A wreck right ahead!" I roared with all my might. "Hard astarboard, hard astarboard!"

"Hard astarboard it is!" came back the answer, sharp and sudden as the report of a musket, and the ship paid off.

I rushed to the bow, and saw the great thing pass. It was the hull of a ship as big as ours. She was dismasted, and on her beam ends; probably her cargo had shifted, and no doubt she had been abandoned long ago. She was as frightful a danger as if she had been an island or a mile of coast, and nothing but something shrill on the bowsprit saved us from crushing, bow in, to her. I have seen a few wild sights at sea, but none wilder than that. It went quickly, but whilst I held it, nothing more tragic, forlorn, cold with the stormy desolation of the ocean, could I have imagined. The charge of the surge smote the death-light of the deep into her. The fire of foam was all about her; the sea crashed in thunder down upon her. She swept

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past, and dodging a flying cloud of spray I made my way to the foot of the bowsprit again.

A little figure in oilskins and sou'-wester was crawling like a rat down the giant whitespar. I hailed him, and he said he was Boyton. I was much surprised, and gripping him by the arm took him down the fo'c'sle ladder and in the shelter of the galley paused a minute to speak.

"What were you doing out on the bowsprit?"

"I wanted to see the ship, sir," he answered.

"The ship!" I cried.

"I wanted to see her rushing at me, sir."

I knew what he meant. Often had I in my time made my way at sunset or by moonlight on to the jib-boom "to see the ship" thrashed by the gale, coming at me, the noblest, the most exhilarating, the most inspiriting sight in the world. You view her in her leaning tower of beauty, and she tosses you, and she sinks you as her toy, and she seems to know that one there is who watches her with love.

"Glad you didn't go overboard," said I. "You funk'd the mizzen rigging yesterday, and here you are in the middle-watch on the bowsprit with a heavy sea beating over the bow. You are a young fool, but you saved the ship, and you shall get the credit of it."

Both the captain and the mate were very well pleased with this lad on my telling them how he had been keeping a lookout on the bowsprit. The captain went so far as to pat him on the back, and to say that he would make a good sailor, and the company in the cabin snored below, and only those who were awake on deck could tell how suddenly the mighty figure of Death had leapt up out of that broken and boiling sea, and how the ghastly horror had been evaded by the interpreting and loving gaze of a young dreamer.

We had three days in succession of heavy weather. The gale smoked with rain and spray, and I caught but fleeting

glimpses of Miss Belle. But in this time I thought a good deal about her. It was an amazing destiny that had brought us together. She was a sweet and pretty girl, and of course I was as much in love with her as any young fellow of my age could be.

I went below, after one long, dull, forenoon watch, and when I had eaten a piece of salt beef, and some biscuit, I lighted my pipe and went on deck again to smoke and breathe the air, for our cabin was a kennel, and I scarcely used it but to sleep in or for shelter. They were at lunch in the cuddy. I squatted low out of sight upon the coamings of the booby-hatch. It was a fine morning, but the swell of the bay was in the sea, and the ship rolled lazily, and the bolts of heaven were in the thunder raised by the canvas.

Suddenly looking round I saw Miss Belle standing beside the hatch. She was dressed in hat and jacket for the deck.

"I had hoped to find you here," she said; "and did you expect me to come?"

"I did," I answered.

"Is this your watch below?"

"Yes."

"Then the captain cannot object to our talking," said she.

She went to the cuddy door, called to a steward, and told him to place a chair for her in that corner. This was done. I had stood upon seeing her, but was glad to sit down again on catching sight of the captain seated at the head of the cuddy table.

"I am very fond of these things," said she, pulling out of her pocket a bunch of raisins and a handful or two of almonds. "I can eat them all day. Will you have some?"

I knew the dear girl had pilfered the cabin table for me, and I did not for a moment believe she could eat almonds and raisins all day. I put down my pipe and accepted a bunch, and she gave me some almonds, and we munched

together, I for the love of the raisins, and she for my love of them.

"I wish," she exclaimed, "a photograph of the vision you saw had been taken. Sometimes I feel afraid with my mother's fears when I think of it. Why should I have appeared to you as a full-grown woman, when I was a little girl, and scarcely understood what my mother and yours talked about? Have you seen other visions?"

"None, and I want to see none. Yours was enough. I took to my heels—indeed, I ran."

"And yet you thought it beautiful?"

"It was you, and therefore beautiful," said I. "But even a stout-hearted boy will run from the apparition of a girl formed of moonlight and mist."

"And I gazed at you steadily?"

"That was the alarming part. It was you, and it was your face, and you looked at me with the expression you now wear."

She sank her head and fell into thought, and then said, without looking at me—

"It must have been a delusion."

"Let me possess it," I exclaimed. "Every man is entitled to one delusion. But very few are visited by such delusions as you," I added a little ardently.

She handed me another bunch of raisins. I put them in my pocket for young Boyton, and picked up my pipe. At any moment the captain might thrust his great head out through the cuddy door, and I did not want him to see me eating almonds and raisins with Miss Belle. After a short silence she exclaimed with a sparkling look :

"There are two Irish gentlemen amongst the passengers, and I thought they would come to blows at table just now. One is from Belfast and the other from Waterford, and they cannot keep their temper."

"We will tie them by their heels, and fling them across the main-stay," said I.

And then somehow it came into my head to consider all of a sudden that this gentle, fair girl was about as lonely in the world as an orphan could well be. Her parents were dead; she was without brothers or sisters. The thought made me say :

“Are you going to settle in Australia?”

“Yes.”

“For good?”

She nodded.

“Then we may never meet again, if I don’t make another voyage to Australia,” said I looking at her anxiously.

She mused a moment, and answered with a touch of archness which did not accord with my mood.

“Australia is nearly four months off.”

“Do you like the aunt you’re going to?”

“I don’t remember her.”

“What sort of an uncle is the man who saw you off?” said I.

“Uncle George?—a kind but rough man. His name is Stubbs—a very ancient name—he says he has traced the Stubbs’ through Birmingham down into Devon, then through Cornwall, and finally over the Land’s End, when he finds them in praams, shaping a course for Denmark. Is that old enough for you?”

“They made a fresh descent, I suppose.”

“Why don’t you eat your raisins?”

I told her that I was keeping them for Boyton.

“I’ll steal some apples and biscuits for the boys,” said she, “and then confess to the captain. He will not be angry. He was second mate of a ship which carried troops. My father was in command of the soldiers, and he and Mr. Bowser were good friends. Then Captain Bowser knows my aunt, Mrs. Riley, at Sydney. Uncle George is also a friend of his. I wonder he should stop me from talking to you in your watch or on deck.”

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Just then no less a man than the captain himself stepped to the cuddy door, very fat about the neck, very glassy about the eye, unmeaning in expression. I started up, and was about to sink down the hatch.

"You needn't go, sir," said he.

"Captain Bowser, may I have some apples for the midshipman?" said the girl.

"How often?" he answered.

"As often as I please," she replied.

"We do not ship apples for midshipmen," said the captain, laughing dully, and he stepped back again into the cuddy, easily hearing her call out—"Since you won't give them to me, I shall steal them, Captain Bowser."

"I wish he would place you under my care, and give me nothing else to do," said I.

"It is going to be a very long voyage," she answered. "Will it be disastrous? I sometimes think that doomed ships sail away with their sails and decks clothed in shadow. To what sort of eye is that shadow visible? To yours, perhaps. You have seen the most wonderful vision I have ever heard of."

"There is no shadow upon this ship," I answered, mechanically glancing aloft and around, "unless it is the second mate."

"What's that?" exclaimed a voice overhead.

I started, and leaning back saw Mr. Curling craning his melancholy face over the poop-rail.

"To whom are you talking, Longmore?"

"To Miss Stuart, sir," I answered, very much confused, for I had not imagined any man could have heard me in the shindy the sails were kicking up.

"Give Miss Stuart my compliments," said Curling, "and assure her that whether we see it or not, there is a shadow upon everything, and that is why we are told to pray for the light."

"What an ear he has!" exclaimed Belle.

"As long as the chief mate's chalk line," said I, and I was about to address the second mate again, but found that he had withdrawn.

"It will not do to whisper secrets here," said Belle, laughing.

"Who's whispering now," said I. "Are these your Irish friends?"

Two men were talking with excitement in the cuddy. In a minute they came out, still talking with excitement. Instead of going forward, or mounting the poop ladder, they came to a stand, taking not the least notice of us, and roared at each other. It was not an argument. It was a duet of ungovernable passion; they shouted with their noses close together. One of the gentlemen, named Gleeson, who hailed from Waterford, gesticulated with clenched fists. They silenced the noise of the sails. They would have made a gentle undertone of a crashing roll of thunder. Women when they argue talk together, but men as a rule will listen to each other. These gentlemen's passions rendered them incapable of listening. Miss Stuart was frightened, and stood up. All that I could catch was "Priests—rints—Feargus O'Connor—landlords—slaves—bogs—O'Connell."

Miss Stuart, with a face of dismay, said something I did not hear, and went on to the poop, and I went below to give the raisins to young Boyton, and lie down, and read, and sleep before eight bells came round.

CHAPTER XIV.

“AS THEY SWEEP THROUGH THE DEEP.”

It was two days after this shindy in the recess when I came on deck at eight bells in the second dog watch. The first watch had begun. It was fine, and the spangled curtain of the night had fallen upon the deep blue courts, the golden recesses, the gilded and thrilling pavilions of the west. I forget our exact whereabouts; we had made good way; the breeze that had dusted us had driven us also. This night the ship sat almost upright. She carried her royals, and her yards were braced a little forwards.

Young Boyton, who was a favorite of mine, leaned with me over the lee-rail, and he talked to me about his home, and the schools he had been at, whilst we watched the black water broken into life now and again by a streak of fire, here and there by a curl of foam. This young boy reminded me very much of myself when I was a boy, but he was infinitely cleverer than ever I was. He was, indeed, the cleverest lad of his years I ever met—out and away cleverer than any at Dodson's. He was a real genius, a lad of strange and fine imaginations, and I would notice that when on deck and he was not at work, his eyes would be forever haunting the sky and sea; and if an ivory or a purple sail reposed in the far-off liquid atmosphere, his gaze fastened upon it with an expression of contemplation that was not the gaze of idle curiosity.

I was not much more than a boy myself, and made a bit rough by the seafaring life, and could scarcely do justice then to this imaginative, merry-eyed little chap.

Dana says that at sea there is no time for sentiment. This, I think, is a mistake. There is plenty of time. You have the long night watch, and through it you may stalk, perhaps without a break, lost in thought, and in the day there is not only the watch below, in which a young fellow can dream and muse and read to his heart's content, but even during his watch on deck when at work he can find plenty of opportunities for quite as much reflection as may be good for him, if he is of the average type, which in those days I am sorry to say, though of gentlemanly extraction, was decidedly a drinking, swearing, and most unsentimental type.

A man came up the poop steps and called me by name. He was the bo'sun of the ship. I walked to the head of the ladder and asked him what he wanted.

“There are two cuddy gents mousin' about forrads,” he answered; “I've been a-watchin' of them, and I don't understand what they are at.”

“What *are* they at?” I asked.

“They dodge from port to starboard, then from starboard to port, as though they wanted to get a piece of the deck to themselves,” he replied.

I went down the steps and walked forward, and abreast of the galley on the port side found Mr. Gleeson and Mr. Johnson standing upright and motionless like sentries. It was not so dark but that I could see them, and I also noticed a something peculiar in the way in which each man held his right arm. I stopped, pretending to mistake them for two of the sailors, and then exclaimed:

“Good evening, gentlemen!”

“Gleeson and I want to have a few friendly words together,” said Johnson. “Is there no part of this ship in which two first-class passengers may be able to talk quietly and alone without their privacy being invaded by a damned lot of sailors, who are in and out; who, if *we* cross, *they* cross? *There's* one of them,” said he, point-

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ing to the boatswain who stood at a little distance. "Is that man a ship's constable? Are we in Ireland here?"

"Why don't you go upon the forecastle?" said I; "you'll find the deck quiet there, I expect. Nobody but the look-out moving; but don't trudge, gentlemen, for you'll be walking over the heads of sleeping sailors, and if you make a noise some of them will come up through the little hatch, and then you will think you *are* in Ireland."

This sally of mine provoked no laughter; on the contrary both men viewed me for a little in silence. Mr. Gleeson then said:

"Smother the forecastle! We want this part of the ship for a quiet talk, and I daresay if you will give the order the men will keep away, and not bother us by listening to our conversation."

"Ask the gents what they are a-holding of," here called out the boatswain.

At this Johnson whipped his right hand behind his back and the other stuck his right hand into his coat pocket.

"What law of this ship justifies that man dogging us, and asking infernally impertinent questions?" cried Mr. Gleeson.

But even *then* I could not guess their meaning, and stepping to the boatswain I said softly, "What are they holding, do you think?"

"Bruised if I don't believe that each man has a loaded pistol in his hand!"

This was a conjecture that raised the matter to a platform too tall for my berth, when the captain and chief mate were both on the poop for me to make a report to, and saying, "Loaf around, but keep your eye upon them," I walked aft.

Mr. Pinch stood close against the head of the weather-steps. He was talking to Sir Thomas Knight. As I approached from to leeward, I heard this little man say that

he had smelt fire three nights running : no, it was not cheese, it was fire.

"If it was fire," answered the mate, whilst I paused, waiting for him to come to me, "the ship would be burnt out long before now, and you and I would be afloat in a little boat, you steering, me rowing. What is it?" said he, stepping down to me, for I stood half way.

"There are two cuddy passengers dodging about with pistols forward. I think they want to shoot each other."

"Who are they?"

"Gleeson and Johnson."

He saw how it stood in an instant, for he had been at table when the men had quarreled, and they had argued repeatedly with blood and heat in his presence. He sank off the poop and I followed him.

It is not agreeable to talk to people who grasp loaded pistols. Here were two men intent upon each other's life, and only waiting a clear deck to flash a ball through each other's head or heart. They stood as I had left them. The boatswain watched them, and two or three seamen standing on the fore-hatch also watched them.

"May I inquire your business in this part of the ship?" said Mr. Pinch.

"As cuddy passengers we have a right to occupy any part of the vessel we choose," answered Mr. Gleeson.

"You are greatly mistaken," said the mate. "You are trenching upon the sailors' quarters, and I must ask you to step aft."

"What countryman are you?" said Mr. Johnson. "By God! I do not pay my hard money to be ordered about by a damned chief mate!"

"You shall apologize for that yet," said Mr. Pinch quietly, "if I have to wring it out of your nose. Give up your fire-arms."

"I give up nothing," cried Mr. Gleeson, "until this gentleman admits the grossness of his misstatements."

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"Stand aside, Mr. Pinch," said Johnson in a voice that trembled with temper, deep, sullen, groaning. "There's no answer to a lie but this," he continued, backing away, and putting himself into a posture for shooting.

Mr. Pinch sprang upon him. I had never thought there was so much alertness and elasticity in that loose frame. Both men fell down. The pistol flashed, and a sharp report rang through the ship. "Hullo, hullo!" I heard the captain shout at the end of the poop. There was a smart noise of running feet, like autumn leaves blown along a pavement. The boatswain fell upon Mr. Gleeson, who after a short wrestle surrendered his weapon, and stalked moodily towards the cuddy, with bowed head and folded arms.

The report of a pistol shot is a terrifying sound at sea on a quiet night, when it can be heard with distinctness in every part of the ship: you instantly conclude that a mutiny has broken out, and dread, on rushing up the steps, to behold the dead body of a sailor, the captain stabbed and dying, and the seamen plunging at their two or three officers with knives. The shot awoke the watch below in the fore-castle, all tumbled out to see what had happened: nearly everybody, excepting the ladies, came running from aft, and the waist was crowded with people.

"Let me get up," shouted Mr. Johnson, who was on his back, with the chief mate kneeling on him.

"Give me hold of that pistol!" roared Pinch, who was now furious.

In the struggle that followed the weapon blazed off again with the report of a blunderbuss, but nobody was hurt; the recoil, however, among us was very general. Captain Lepper backed and fell at length over Sir Thomas Knight's feet, who in his turn fled to the poop to the ladies and the safety there. One extremely nervous man—his name was Cox; he was a London tradesman, and making the voyage for his health—this man standing beside

me leaped when the pistol went off, crying, "By Heaven! I believe I am shot!" It proved to be pure imagination—a twinge of rheumatism, some little pang of surface nerve. The commotion was increased by the parrot-like screeching of Mrs. Trevor from the rail at the break of the poop. "What is it? I insist upon knowing. Who is letting off guns at this hour? Why doesn't the captain lock them up? Where is the captain?" and she made every sail yell "captain" with the screech she slapped into its dusky, sleepy hollow.

It was quite clear that somebody must be shot if the pistol was not removed. Old Bowser and the boatswain made a dash, a number of seamen rushed upon the prostrate Irishman, and the clumsy, old-fashioned, but deadly engine was torn by the roots out of Johnson's enraged fist. He rose panting.

"Are you hurt, sir?" said the captain to the mate.

"No, sir, the shot flew aloft."

"Is this a piece of Ireland afloat?" suddenly and convulsively roared Johnson, with gasps as though he would tear his throat out with his voice, "that mates and sailors are dirty constables, and gentlemen are not allowed to settle their disputes according to the established code of honor."

"Disputes are not permitted aboard this ship," said the captain. "You will save a very great deal of trouble by withdrawing to your cabin."

He was obstinate; his head was full of blood; he had wanted to shoot a man; but when he gathered from one or two determined thrusts from the boatswain's elbows that physical force was the only argument they now meant to employ in that ship's waist, he sullenly went away to his berth.

After it was all over the poop continued in a state of distraction, and this was bound to be when Mrs. Trevor was present to fill the ship with her rasping yells and

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shrieks. Belle came and asked me what it was all about, and we stood talking, but all the same I could not help listening with much inward laughter to a conversation between Sir Thomas Knight, Mr. Cox, and Mr. Goring. Cox said he could swear he had been wounded. He had distinctly felt the ice-cold sensation of the shot tearing through his thigh.

"They should be locked away," said Sir Thomas Knight. "The perils of the sea are numerous enough, God knows! and the captain need not add to them by leaving two fire-eating Irishmen to run loose."

"With such people on board," said Mr. Goring, "you can't tell what's going to happen from hour to hour. If they are not allowed to shoot each other they may try to drown each other by drilling a hole in the ship and letting her sink with all hands. What would *they* care for all hands?"

"Good God! what an idea!" cried the little knight. "Mention it to the captain, will you?"

"It's not very easy to make a hole in a ship's wall," said Mr. Cox, "and neither man wants to die. Each shoots in hope. But if a ship sinks and takes all down there is no hope."

"I should like to connect those men," said Sir Thomas Knight, "with the peculiar smell of fire which I have been smelling for the last three nights in my cabin. The chief mate calls it 'cheese.'"

Cox shrieked a little in nervous laughter.

"Why cheese?" inquired Mr. Goring.

"Because I sleep over the place where they keep the refreshments—I mean the stores," answered the knight.

"The very word fire in the middle of the sea is horrible—is ghastly," said Mr. Cox.

Here Lady Knight broke into this talk by calling to her husband.

I was allowed a good ten minutes' spooning *chat* with

Belle before I was troubled. The idea of my having seen her as a phantom when I was a child had strongly impressed her. It had been visible to me soon after we met and she got to know who I was, that her heart inclined my way. A man, old as I was then, is a little heedless in his love-making, and will not pause to consider whither his steps are tending. Here was this girl going out to Australia to settle there, and I should be returning, and it was a thousand to one if we ever met again ; or, if we did meet, by some incomparable chance or trick of the sea, she might be a squatter's wife, for so much beauty would not be left for long to languish unmated in the Colonies, whilst I might have lost my heart to another girl. A while yet we stood together, and I talked, not indeed in the language of love, but in the accents of love, and she listened and answered, and seemed content.

The ship rippled quietly onwards. The delicate lights of the deep started in strange spirit-forms of fire from the side. The stars of the heavens flashed off the yards and yard-arms and trucks like meteors as the ship swayed. The second mate, disturbed by the sound of firearms, had come on deck with the rest, and was talking to Mr. Pinch, over to windward ; and I heard Mr. Pinch say :

“You'll see ! I'll ring it out of his nose yet ! What ! call me a damned mate before the men, and me submit to it ? I, the holder of a master's certificate ! No !” and his voice was very sarcastic, “not by the length of a chalk line from here to the man at the wheel.”

At that moment a sailor, stationed on the lookout, hailed the poop, and reported a light on the lee bow. All rushed to leeward.

“Jump aloft forward with a night-glass, Mr. Longmore, and see what you can make of it,” said Mr. Pinch ; and this order ended my walk with Belle.

I took the binocular glass from its place in the companion-hatch, went forward, and mounted as high as the

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top-gallant yard. The sight down away on the lee bow, as seen by me through the glasses from the lofty altitude I commanded, was extremely strange, and I was greatly puzzled. It seemed as though some giant had dipped a brush into rolling, swelling, and smoking phosphorus, and smeared a corner of the deep with a church-yard corpse-like light. I had first thought it was a ship, but no ship could possibly light up so wide an area of water as was covered by that illumination. I viewed it attentively, and in the heart of the sea of fire I seemed to catch a sight of a crimson nut-shaped object, which came and went, as though palpitating with flame ; and now I had it, and now it was gone, and the heavens lay faint and starless over that mysterious bed of light.

I was hailed from the deck, and reported that I could not make out what the light was, but that the ocean seemed on fire that way.

"Come down," and down I went, and gave to the captain and Mr. Pinch the best description of the thing which my wits could furnish. It was wonderful—it was certainly not a ship on fire—it was no submarine upheaval.

The helm was shifted, and we shaped a course which would presently give us a sight of that gleaming scene from the deck. As we approached, the light grew stronger ; the heavens sickened into sulphur. The captain and the mate stood together, staring. "I never saw anything like it," I heard the captain say, whilst Mr. Cox and one or two others hovered near, thirstily drinking in every word.

"Nor I, sir," answered Mr. Pinch. "I've heard of volcanic fires lighting the sea ; but that is the sea itself on fire," and again he leveled the binocular.

"Is it desirable that we should sail close ?" said Mr. Cox. "Fire is a dreadful thing at sea."

"Fearful, indeed," echoed Sir Thomas Knight.

"We are not on fire, gentlemen," answered the captain coolly, "and yonder light is not yet close."

“No ; but a current might set us right into the fire, and defy helm and tactics to help us, and the ship would burst into flames, and we should be roasted to a man,” said Captain Lepper.

“Too many captains in this ship,” muttered old Bowser.

It was nearly ten o'clock before we had drawn near enough to obtain a clear view of that wonderful night-scene of ocean, and the outer rim of the burning region might then have been about a mile and a half distant. In the heart of that great plain of wavering, fainting, flashing light lay the carcass of a burning ship. She glowed like a furnace, and paled the surface of light about her, and now, of course, it was easily guessed that she had been a ship of about a thousand tons, loaded with oil, and had taken fire. We swept the sea for any sign of a boat. Nothing of the sort was to be seen. If her people were out of the ship, they had probably left her some hours earlier, and were below the horizon in their boats, or else picked up. One could feel no yearning to send help to that glowing cinder amidships of the prodigious area of burning oil, simply because one knew and saw that nothing born of woman, nothing hatched of an egg, nothing littered under a longboat, nothing, in short, that drew the breath of life, could be alive in that glowing inaccessible ember.

By this time we had trimmed sail, and the ship was heading along her course, and the night was dark and mystic, and strange with the yellow sheen that was fluctuating for miles upon our beam : not making light, but rather drowning it, for if you looked up you saw that it had put out the stars, and our canvas took no color from it.

“What a lot of valuable property is being destroyed,” exclaimed Sir Thomas Knight. That was the city gentleman's interpretation of the sentiment of the scene.

Mr. Goring struck a higher note. “I do not think,” said he, “that the imagination of Edgar Poe—and his imagination was a sort of spiritual Jim-Jams—could con-

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ceive anything more horrible than the situation of a crew of men locked up in a burning ship, and surrounded by a burning sea, so that they are unable to launch their boats."

"Horrible!" said Mr. Cox.

"I suppose," said Captain Lepper—I happened to be standing close to this little company of gentlemen—"that shows of yonder sort are called the romance of the sea. Where is the romance? To me it is a surface of burning oil, with a crackling ship in the midst of it."

"A yellow primrose," said Mr. Goring.

"Sailors," continued Captain Lepper, upon whom the allusion to the primrose was lost, "are grandmothers in their superstitions and sentiments. I don't believe in their superstitions; they have been forced upon them by imaginative writers. There is nothing more detestable to me than the idea of what is called 'an old salt,' who pretends to believe in mermaids, and the *Flying Dutchman*. We have no tommyrot of that sort in the army. You wouldn't get a soldier to pretend to believe in the like of such infernal rubbish as the sea-serpent on the chance of getting half a pint of beer. Sailors tell lies, and they know they're lies. I'm not fond of the breed."

"There's no love lost between you," said Mr. Goring. "I remember a sailor reciting these lines to me: 'A messmate before a shipmate, a shipmate before a stranger, a stranger before a dog, but a dog before a soldier.'"

"All the Service books are about soldiers," said Mr. Cox; "why don't they write sea stories?"

"There's too many, man, there's too many as it is," muttered Captain Lepper, who seemed to be chewing upon the lines Mr. Goring had delivered.

"I know of three writers only," said Mr. Cox, "and our country is the supreme maritime nation of the world."

"Who are they?" inquired Captain Lepper with a sneer in his voice, and here I saw the little figure of Boyton stealing along the rail to listen.

"Marryat, Michael Scott, Smollett," answered Mr. Cox.

"Marryat is top weight," said the little knight, "but the best of sea stories are only fit for boys."

"I won't even allow that you have Smollett as a sea-writer," exclaimed Mr. Goring. "He spent a short time in the Navy as a surgeon's mate, or something of that sort. He never went aloft with the men. He wouldn't have known the right rope to let go. He is ranked as a sea novelist, but search his books and you'll find a precious sight more filth than blue water."

"We are not many days out from Plymouth," said Captain Lepper, "and there may be three or four months before us. Who the deuce wants a bookful about it when it's all over. I've never read a sea story in my life."

"If I could write like an angel, and was as soaked in brine as Captain Bowser, I wouldn't deal with the sea," said Mr. Goring. "Every point that a sailor would appreciate is lost. If ever I wrote a novel at all it should be a story for old ladies."

"A love story?" asked Captain Lepper, with a meaningless laugh.

"Ay," answered Mr. Goring, "and a thick 'un."

"That oil's beginning to burn out, I think," said the little knight, and they all went away on to the quarter where they could obtain a better view.

The sheen was dimming; it was now about two points abaft the beam, and five bells had just been struck. The ladies had gone below. I took a step to the skylight for a sight of Belle, but all the ladies seemed to have gone to bed. I had missed her whilst that light lay burning, and whilst I listened to the talk of Lepper and the others. I wanted her to be at my side to view such a picture as that: her beauty, her sweetness, her soft answers would have found for it a romance beyond all magic of that night's inspiration.

It grew to midnight, and the stars flashed fast and furious

with the swing of this black ball of earth, and the lurch of our pale spot of ship. And now a midshipman struck eight bells, and I went below, and eat a little piece of pork, soused in vinegar, and ship's biscuit, and drank a drain of rum—for rum was regularly served out every day to all hands aboard that vessel—and turned in, and slept the sleep of the sailor, swift and deep.

For some time nothing occurred worthy of entering in this log-book. As I did not live in the cuddy I could only gather from Belle how affairs stood there, and from her I learnt that the Irishmen were giving no more trouble. They had cut each other, which was a good thing. Little spasms of jealousy occasionally visited me when I saw Belle talking on the poop to any members of my sex, but no girl could have been safer from all temptations in the way of flirtations than Miss Stuart. Cox had left his wife at home. Lepper was well guarded. Goring paid no more attention to Miss Stuart than he did to Mrs. Trevor.

It was somewhat dull for her, you will think. It was frightfully dull. Nothing in this world was ever more tedious, more tiresome, more numbing to the animal spirits than a voyage in a sailing ship round the Cape. One condition of travel in those days is now forgotten: I mean the calm—the sheet calm—the clock calm which gives you back your face when you overlay the rail, which nips and steadies the whole fabric of ship as in a bed of quicksilver. The empty bottle that was on the starboard bow yesterday is on the port quarter to-day, and will be on the port bow to-morrow. The sea steams and winds round you, brilliant lines and curves of colored water float motionless upon it, and no fish leaps to break the wearying splendor. It is dreary enchantment, a hideous bewitchment, and you wearily boil down the whole poetry of it into a curse.

Well for the passenger that this condition of the sea life has passed for him. He is now thrashed along day and

night, faster than a gale of wind ever drove the swiftest clipper keel in my day. It is always a fair breeze, though right ahead, and if a steamer is a few hours late people grow anxious. And yet in some sort we managed in that ship to divert ourselves, though the company of passengers were slender. Mr. Cox, for example, was a very remarkable ventriloquist. I never heard a man that did not make that art a profession who could throw his voice about as Cox did. He provided us with several entertainments in the dog watches, when the weather was warm and fine. The sailors were allowed to come upon the poop to hear and see. It was a rare treat to them. Mr. Cox pretended to quarrel with a man up aloft; he feigned to be the captain, and gave the man ridiculous orders, and the man replied with insults and laughter. The jacks roared at these jokes; they were also astonished, and I saw the whiskered dogs, all fairly clean and washed down for these occasions, staring up at the mast, as though they could not credit that a real man was not up there answering Cox.

Mr. Cox also had the trick of painting his fist into the aspect of a human face incomparably well. I would laugh near to splitting my sides when he made this strange face at the end of his arm talk and grimace. On the whole, Cox was entertaining; he improved upon the original Cox as we ran southwest, and was so popular amongst the men that they always had a smile for him when they relieved the wheel, or in other ways caught his eye.

Then again Mr. Goring possessed a magic lantern which he designed as a gift for a family at Sydney. He gave us several exhibitions with this thing in the cuddy, and the crew were always admitted, for Bowser was not only a good seaman, he knew how to treat sailors, and the same crews went voyage after voyage with him. The slides of this magic lantern presented some of the streets of London and various pictures of the river side below bridges. Had

every slide been a bottle of grog the jacks could not have cheered more lustily. A small piano was lashed abaft the mizzen mast, and Miss Parker on these occasions was good enough to favor us with some popular airs, so as to eke out Mr. Goring's efforts to amuse us. Efforts they were, for he not only told us the names of the streets, but recounted little passages of their history. "This, gentlemen and ladies, is Fleet Street. I presume you all know it? Yonder is Bolt Court, where lived the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson. Samuel Johnson was no friend of the sailor, and said many insulting things of his vocation, but he wrote a dictionary, and clogged the language by the introduction of a number of Latinized words, and he made so many smart, true, and deep-hearted remarks to Boswell, the Scotch specter who was ever at his elbow, that they have passed into proverbs. He was a great humorist, and though I expect to be contradicted, I am satisfied in my own mind that Charles Dickens drew largely from him in writing 'Pickwick.'" Thus would Goring talk as the slides glowed upon the screen. The sailors no doubt thought Dr. Johnson a celebrated physician, and some might even have formed a resolution to consult him on their return.

One of the most memorable features of these entertainments was Mrs. Trevor's deep laugh.

Sir Thomas Knight thought to help, and proposed a lecture. The captain thanked him, and the sailors came aft to listen to an address on the improbability of the moon being inhabited. His wife and daughter watched him with anxiety, for his English was inaccurate, his aspirates inaudible, and Mr. Gleeson laughed when merriment was not challenged. The knight did not know enough about the moon to justify him in troubling us with an address on the subject, and this was the first and only appearance of Sir Thomas in public.

And all the day we were slanting south and west to the

sun, and every evening gave us the sight of a new star winking its welcome over the bow, whilst astern some stars of home sank down into the sea and perished. Often the survivors of great catastrophes and disasters will look back and seek in their memory for premonition of the event. Was there no hint given? Did no shadow of prophecy rest even upon *one* of us? Did the people in the great steamer that in blackness ripped her bilge out in the space of a heart-beat or two, and swirled over in a thunder of water roaring down her hatchways, mingled with the piteous sounds of women and children shrieking for help, did those people, sailors and passengers all whom perished, saving one or two, receive no intimation that death was at hand, a ghastly shadow whose cold breath was for the soul to feel as the flesh feels the breath of the iceberg? Well, it pleases God that we shall not see beyond our noses, and ships go down full of light and the echo of the piano, and the glad high note of the singer still lingers, and the story the man is telling in the smoking-room is interrupted.

Providence had indeed supplied us with a spirit-damper, whose name was Curling, but nobody took any notice of his darkling ideas, nor were his prophecies of a practical sort, and when the captain heard he distributed tracts in the forecabin, he answered, "What for? They can't read."

I remember once, after Mr. Cox had been amusing us, that this melancholy second mate cornered me on the quarter-deck, and with an impassioned look and bright black eyes begged me to tell him in confidence if I made it a rule to say my prayers morning and night.

"Don't let us get upon that subject," said I.

"Longmore," said he, "you should always be in a state of preparedness."

"But why do you trouble yourself about me particularly?" I asked.

"I could earnestly wish to think of you as saved," he

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replied. "The sea is full of peril. The land is equally full of peril. At any moment may come the dreadful summons. Pray read and digest this," and he forced a tract upon me.

Shall we call his commonplaces premonitions? He was a gloomy idiot, and damping as he was to the spirits, I find nothing to recollect in his talk that at all rises to the dignity of the spirit of prophecy.

CHAPTER XV.

THE "ANNE BONNY."

THE captain put more westing into his navigation than I quite understood, which means little, for I was by no means expert as a navigator. But I found out that the course somewhat puzzled Mr. Pinch also. The captain was evidently bent on crossing the equator on a line of longitude unusually far to the west. Doubtless he had some trick of seamanship above the others in this matter; he had made the voyage out and home often enough to know what to do, though he should have had no other faculty left in him than his sense of smell. This being so, I could not help wondering every day when I went aft and looked into the binnacle, at the quantity of westing the captain was putting into his course.

I think we were in about eighteen degrees north of the equator, when the strangest adventure at sea I ever met with befel us. I had shared the morning watch with the chief mate, and went below, when the bell struck eight, to get some breakfast. Whilst I was eating and drinking, a young reefer, who was in the starboard watch, came down for a pencil for the second mate, and said that a sail had sprung up almost ahead, and Mr. Curling thought that she looked to be in trouble.

"That's what Curling hopes," said I. "He can't see a ship without believing her to be in distress. He should sail under the black flag; our colors are too gaudy for a young man who is always peeping into the gates of hell to see how his friends are getting on."

The lad shot out with the pencil, and when I had finished

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breakfast I carefully washed myself and brushed my hair, and changed my shirt. A wash in that den was no luxury. We used zinc basins and salt water, fresh being all too scarce, and the marine soap, which made our sea-chests smell abominably, was a lie, like the outcome of our mess-money; it wouldn't lather. I still possess the Bible which I took to sea with me when I made my first voyage, and after all these years it smells as strongly of marine soap as if I had brought it ashore yesterday. In every walk of life the subtle and nimble cheat lies in wait for you; will not he keep his hands off a midshipman's bar of marine soap, and provide him with a soap which will produce even a ghastly semblance of foam if fretted in salt water very hard indeed? The marine cheat sneaks into the sugar cask; he is hermetically sealed up in the canned beef; you taste him when you open his red sepulcher of dead potato; he comes out with the allowance of lime-juice, and your nose feels him in the vapor of the tea which is brought aft from the coppers. Many sailors have been poisoned by ship's chandlers and purveyors, who have wallowed in wealth and died, leaving everything to their widows and children, and nothing to the orphans of the merchant seamen they murdered. Can we do without a devil? Not whilst bad provisions go to sea.

Having washed and dressed, I went on deck to smoke a pipe under the cuddy front, where I hoped to meet Miss Stuart. The air was so clear it was like looking through a lens: the blue breeze swept with sunshine seemed to gush in brilliance! A thousand tiny clouds lay curled like new moons high in the heaven. The flash of the flying fish was frequent, our speed was about six, and the ship sailed onwards with a soft noise of foam. I took a look at the sea over either bulwark rail, but nothing fresh had sprung into view, and the sail ahead was just to be seen from my low elevation when the bow sank in the bright blue hollow.

I had not long to wait before Belle came out. She exactly knew how my watches came round. I was by this time very much in love with her. She had those qualities of gentleness and sweetness which I adore in a woman. I had some notion too, that her heart was as true as virgin gold, and that the man who slipped a wedding ring on her finger would be marrying a girl capable of great self-sacrifice for him, whose loyalty sickness cannot dim nor time weary. I was somewhat young to take such views of this girl, but it is possible to think with judgment sometimes even at twenty.

Did she love me? I had little doubt of it. Indeed she had come very near to falling in love with me before we had boarded the ship at Plymouth, and I am no coxcomb in saying this. Nothing had passed between us. We loved in an unreckoning way, which troubled me. We should be devotedly attached before we arrived at Sydney. Long before then she might have consented to marry me, and when we arrived, what was to happen? If I married her, I should leave a young bride after three months in Australia, and God knows when I might be able to see her again. Indeed, I was too young, and in no position to marry. Here was I, after having served four years at sea, filling the responsible post of third mate at a pound a month. No man ought to marry on a pound a month. I say I did not know what to do. Yet I was in love, and she was in love, and we were both young, and took delight in each other's company, and though I was constantly feeling myself at a loss, we held on all the same in the old uncalculating way.

I never saw her look sweeter, and fresher, and prettier than she did this morning when she came out of the cuddy door, followed by the steward with a chair. She was dressed in pure white, and her hair shone in glory. Her eyes matched the sea, and her teeth were of the ivory whiteness of the foam that broke under our bows. She

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had brought some biscuits, and I never refused these trifles, because I knew it gave her pleasure to give them to me. I nibbled one and put the rest in my pocket; they interfered with my pipe.

We had not been together five minutes when old Mrs. Trevor stepped out of the cuddy door. I suppose she meant to stop, and there being no help for it, I rose from the coamings of the hatch and offered to fetch a chair.

"Is it likely?" she cried in a voice you could have heard at the flying jib-boom end. "Haven't I been young myself, and when Mr. Trevor was making love to me should I have liked an old woman to bundle in and interrupt? Do you mean to get married at Sidney? I hope so. For long engagements leave girls' hearts dry, and their hearts when cracked are found to be full of dust with the worm of memory moving in it."

We were supposed not to resent speeches of this sort in an old lady of eighty-five. Indeed her words were in accord with my strain of thought. I looked at Belle, who instead of blushing, was eying Mrs. Trevor demurely with a soft smile.

"You'll be sailing back with him then as his bride?" continued the old lady, who was exactly like Pilate in this—she did not wait for an answer.

We could not reply.

"If you're married in Sidney;" said she, "ask me to the wedding, and don't forget. And perhaps you'll be stopping in Sydney after all," she continued, casting her one-eyed vision upon me. "There's plenty of room in the Colonies for a young man of spirit, and quantities of gold to be picked up at the back."

Saying which, she smiled on us, and passed out of sight into the cuddy. Belle was not so much confused as I was. Had she employed the old woman to bring things to a head, she could not have taken her interruption

and questions more calmly. I sat down again and lighted my pipe.

"Of course, Belle, you know that I love you?" said I. She smiled.

"I have been making up my mind," said I, "to ask you to be my wife, and when you have consented we will look at the difficulties ahead of us."

"What difficulties?"

"Will you be my wife, Belle?"

"Yes," she answered; "I was born to be your wife."

It was a brilliant morning, and our scene of love-making very much exposed; the stewards came and went, certain seamen hung in the rigging and gazed down upon us. Mr. Gleeson was arguing hotly with Mr. Goring in the port gangway hard by. It will be seen, then, that it was impossible for me to be demonstrative. I could not kiss her. I dared not even extend my hand to take hers, with those jacks up there looking down.

"What are the difficulties you speak of, Walter?" said she.

"Why, you see, I am the son of a poor man, and am following the worst paid of the callings."

"Your parents would not object to your marrying me?"

"Certainly not."

"Couldn't you leave your ship at Sydney and settle there?" she asked. "My aunt is a woman of influence, I know, and could easily find you a berth. Do you like the idea of that?"

"Very much," I answered. "I certainly can leave the ship by the easy method of walking out of her and disappearing. If I can find a berth, Belle, so that we could take a house, and I could be in a position to support you"—and here my spirits fell into what Defoe calls a hurry, not to be confounded with flurry. I could conceive that my eyes brightened, and the color of hope and happiness mounted in my cheeks.

"There need be no trouble whatever about it," said Belle. "My aunt's influence shall procure you a very good place, and then you will write to your father and mother, and tell them that you have married the phantom of Bouville pond, and that you mean to take her home on a visit, in this very ship, perhaps."

"From which I shall have run," said I, laughing.

We were interrupted by the voices of the captain and the second mate in talk at the break of the poop immediately above our heads.

"She is clearly abandoned," said the captain. "Rather strange," he continued, as though he talked with his eye at the telescope, "considering that she seems all right aloft, and floats with plenty of height of side."

"Probably some loathsome case of fever, or blindness by the fumes of rice," broke in the gloomy voice of the second mate. "It's always unlucky to meet a craft of that sort."

"You have read that in a tract, perhaps," exclaimed Bowser. "You are made to smell a good deal of blue hell in that sort of writings?" and I heard him grunt a greasy laugh out of his coils of neck as he stepped aft on creaking boots.

I went to the rail to look at the ship ahead. I was surprised to find that she was not above a mile or a mile and a half distant. Our pace had improved within the last hour; the sea was sweating under the flogging thongs of a six-knot breeze, but the surge ran small, the swell was a slight curtsey of the bow, and the ship all aslant drove nimbly along, raising crackling noises as she went, as though a little peninsula of bush was on fire under her.

The result lay broadside on to us, and I could make out that she was a mean little bark with her mizzen-mast stepped close to her main-mast. Her topsails were set, her yards braced anyhow, her courses and top-gallant sails hanging. She was black, and the flashing of guns seemed to sparkle in her wet sides as she rolled. All the passen-

gers were on the poop looking at her, and I advised Belle to step up and get a good view, for she would soon be abreast of us.

It was my watch below, and I should have probably gone to my quarters, and profoundly meditated my talk with my sweetheart, if it had not been for that bark, lying just off the bow, a very strange sight, and I wished to see what Bowser meant to do. I was not surprised presently to hear him order the main top-sail to be laid aback. I was pretty sure Bowser was not the man to pass a ship in the strange situation of that bark without a pause and a look. She was now about a quarter of a mile distant, almost abeam, and lying bow on to us. Nothing of life was visible. This was extraordinary, for rarely is a vessel abandoned in complete rig, and all necessary equipment of helm, mast, and sail.

I stared thirstily, expecting every moment to see a human form come running on to the bark's fore-castle, or perhaps I waited for that inevitable figure of the romancist's imagination: the sickly head clothed in a blue cap suddenly showing in a lolling way over the rail, where it mops and mows, whispers with baked lips and cream on its tongue makes passes with the hands with lunatic fierceness, and then suddenly disappears as though pulled down.

The captain who was standing at the foremost quarter boat, saw me in the gangway looking at the bark, and scarce considering that it was not my watch on deck, sang out—"Mr. Longmore, take four men in this quarter boat, and go and overhaul that vessel."

I was ever a lover of adventure; besides, here was an order from the captain's own lips, so springing on to the poop, I asked Curling to call some of his men aft, and then cut the stops of the boat's falls, and saw that a plug and baler were in her. Whilst this was doing, Mr. Cox said to old Bowser, "I hope you'll request Mr. Longmore not to touch any dead body he may come across. You can't

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tell what it may have died of, and he and his crew may return with the plague."

"You'll touch nothing, d'ye hear, Mr. Longmore?" screeched old Mrs. Trevor, finding that the captain made no reply.

By this time the "gripes" had been cast adrift. In a minute or two we were in the water, and I headed the boat for the barque. The more I saw of her the more she perplexed me. Her davits were empty, which was mute but eloquent intimation too, that she had been abandoned. She hung fairly steady upon the sea, bowing to the light heave, and swelling her canvas into a yawn of weariness as she rolled. I thought I would go astern of her first to see her name, and as we passed under the counter I read, "Anne Bonny, Liverpool," which settled her paternity effectually.

"I'll get aboard by those starboard mizzen chains," said I, when just as the men were dipping their oars, and I had shifted the helm to head the boat for the spot I wanted, a strange low roar, like a rumbling note of thunder, broke from her side, and to my astonishment and terror, there leaped into view, with forefeet on the rail, resting its hinder feet on something invisible, a huge shaggy lion, with an immense mane and wonderful eyes, a breast for the goddess of Britannia to caress, so noble and splendid were its proportions and head, and it roared at us as if it meant to leap, and it lashed its back in fury with its tail.

I forget the name of the naturalist who says that there is a note in the roar of a lion that would terrify the devil himself. The instant the men heard the great beast they turned in their seats to look, and sat paralysed.

"Back water," I yelled, "or he'll be on top of us!"

They drove the boat back, and we hung on our oars and gazed. The roar of the lion must have been as audible as the report of a gun on the *Glendower*, and Bowser hardly needed any fuller account to arrive at the truth of the

story. The lion roared several times, whether with rage at sight of us, or whether with famine or the distress of thirst, I did not know.

A man said : " If he jumps, can he swim ? "

" Blamed if I ever seed such a whopper ! " exclaimed a second man. " Why, that there lion might be worth two or three hundred pound if he could be caught and locked up. "

" I never saw a lion in my life before, " said I.

" Only look at his head, sir, " answered the seaman in the bow. " He's the king of all the beasts, and deserves to be. "

" I am not going on board that barque, " said I, " with that lion in the way. See here, pull me under the bows, and I'll try and get a view from the jib-boom. "

They pulled me under the dolphin-striker. Though the barque floated with a good height of side, her curtseys to the sea brought the dolphin-striker within easy reach of my lifted hands as I stood upon a thwart. I sprang and wriggled up the martingale to the jib-boom, and throwing my legs over it looked along the barque's decks, of which I could now command a full view. For some moments I did not quite understand what I saw. The planks in places were heavily stained with blood, pieces of the mangled remains of several animals lay about ; on the port side from amidships almost to the forecastle break ran a massive timber cage with iron bars. Yet it had evidently not been so strongly constructed but that the imprisoned beasts had managed to break out. Aft, near the wheel, I saw something lying coiled, huge, motionless, bloated, like circles of large drain-pipes ; it was an immense snake, but I cannot tell you the species. I could not then say if it was alive or dead, but I do not know what money I should have asked to tempt me to find out, even if the lion had been out of the way.

The handsome beast had left the rail, and was pacing

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the deck, lashing its tail. It did not see me, and I was very glad, though it never could have got at me. Sometimes it smelt at the blood stains, sometimes at the hideous red offal. I heard a queer chattering aloft, and looking up, saw a large brown monkey in the foretop-mast cross-trees. The men in the boat laughed when they got a sight of the poor beast.

"Many animals aboard, sir?" called out one of the sailors.

"I can only see one big snake, and the lion," I answered.

"This seems to me to have been a consignment of wild beasts. Their cage to port there, although as massive to the eye as Newgate, is torn open, and the partitions wrenched. She was carrying a menagerie to some port, and the beasts have been eating one another up, and there's nothing left that I can see but the lion, the snake, and that monkey up there. Come up, one of you, and take a sight of it."

A man sprang from the boat on the dolphin-striker, and placed himself beside me on the jib-boom. The foresail and mainsail were hauled up. The foretopmast-stay-sail was hanging slack over the side. The burden of that bark did not exceed three hundred tons.

"There's certainly no entering of her with that there chap keeping watch," said the man alongside of me. "I wonder if any of the crew been eaten by the beasts."

This was an awful consideration, and made the blood stains and the ghastly purple lumps which lay about in many directions, horrible with human significance. The monkey chattered on high. He seemed to invite us to come to his relief. Such an extraordinary scene you never could have imagined. That great wrenched cage, its partitions shivered, some of its ironwork bent and bulged as though by an explosion; the raw remains and the blood stains; those silent dark brown coils right aft. The lion

saw us, uttered a roar, and the monkey in the rigging shrieked ; it was the shriek of terror, it was the cry of a boy in anguish. The proud and splendid creature came to the heel of the bowsprit, and planting his forefeet upon it, flamed its eyes at us. No forest ever re-echoed the roar of a more stately, superb, kingly head than that.

We made ready to drop into the boat, but it was quickly evident that the brute had no intention of climbing that spar, which was steeved at a very considerable angle, according to the old custom. Indeed, he was certain to have rolled overboard, and a beast with such a head on him as his, doubtless knew what was the right thing to do, even at sea.

Not more than five minutes compassed our getting on to the bowsprit and our observations.

"I'd bring that poor beggar down if that chap would give me a chance," said my companion.

As he uttered the words the creature turned and marched solemnly aft, as far aft as the coils of the serpent, at which it smelt, whence I guessed it might be dead, but who can be sure of a snake ?

"Mind what you are about," said I.

The man who was a young and very active seaman, swung himself on to the forestay, and went up, hand over hand. He then got into the top, and I watched him climb the rigging to the cross-trees. Either the monkey was tame, or it had been civilized by terror, or by hunger or thirst. I expected to see the brute rush aloft up the top-gallant rigging ; you will judge my surprise when I saw the sailor pick him up and place him on his shoulders. The monkey clung to the man's neck and they came down together. I was terribly afraid that the lion, which had come forward again, would spring upon the monkey if it fell from the man's shoulder, in the necessary convulsions of his movements in descending the forestay hand over hand ; but the creature clung to the sailor as though he

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had been a long lost brother ; nothing could shake him off. Together they arrived in safety upon the jib-boom, and I then thought it about time to return to the ship to make my report.

She lay about half a mile to windward. I could find time to admire her beautiful mold of hull, the yacht-like airiness with which she lifted and rolled from the sea ; her masts were stayed to the perfection of a frigate's, the sweating waters kindled rainbows in her cabin windows ; high aloft on the fore-royal yard was the figure of a seaman ; his white trousers were shivering, his face swung like a living cameo against the high deep lake of blue, right overhead. The ship seemed full of people, for besides the passengers the watch below had turned out to view this extraordinary derelict.

I jumped into the mizzen chains and the monkey was handed up. It was a large monkey, by no means a beauty ; on the contrary, it had the most villainous expression of face I ever saw in a monkey, and I have seen many. Before it had been caught and tamed it had probably been hangman to its clan. Belle cried :

"Oh, give the poor creature something to eat and drink !"

The passengers closed round the beast, and I lost sight of it whilst I stood with Captain Bowser and Mr. Curling to report what I had seen.

"Don't you think that your imagination exaggerates that snake's dimensions ?" said the captain after hearing me.

"He would fill the lazarette," I answered. "And its folds look as thick as a drain pipe."

"It is dead," said the second mate, "or it would have gorged the lion."

"Anyhow, no man is going to board that bark whilst that lion is there," said Captain Bowser.

"Lion or no lion," put in the second mate with a shudder, "she may be full of creeping poisonous reptiles."

"Did you see nothing alive in the cages?" asked the captain.

"No, sir," I answered. "Everything seems to have been eaten up saving the lion and the serpent. There are large blocks of beastly-looking meat knocking about, and some of the blood on the deck isn't dry."

"I can't sail away and leave that lion to perish," exclaimed old Bowser. "I am an Englishman, and the lion is a noble beast."

"Better sink the ship and down the whole show, sir," murmured the melancholy second mate in his gloomy note.

"Has anybody got such a thing as a gun or a rifle on board?" cried Bowser.

Nothing of the sort was to be had; pistols were to be borrowed, but it was doubtful if from a distance safe to oneself one could do more than miserably pain without killing the lordly animal with pistols. Mr. Pinch now joined us, and stood looking. Over the side lay the boat, wobbling and streaming as the swift sea flashes rushed her aft to the full scope of her painter, and the four men in her sat waiting and chewing tobacco.

"I'm wondering how we're going to sink that bark so as to drown the lion," said the captain.

"You mustn't think of it! I'll break my heart to see the poor beast swimming!" cried Mrs. Trevor.

"It's useless," continued the captain, addressing himself to Mr. Pinch, "to talk of boring holes in her. That would be easy if you could get aboard. But look how she rolls! Get your boat under the counter say with augers for the run, and one moment the men will be sunk a fathom below their tools, and the next hove up a fathom above them."

"Besides," said Mr. Pinch, "I don't think a boat's crew would work very cheerfully with the chance of that beast yonder springing right into them at any instant. Just one loud roar, sir, and down he comes, all teeth and

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claws, and a single blow, I have heard, will split your head in two, and that boat would float with dead bodies in her, and the lion in command, and they'd leave the useless auger sticking in the timbers."

Whilst Mr. Pinch talked I saw the captain directing his eyes at a piece of artillery which we carried on the poop, betwixt the mizzen-mast and the skylight, to make a noise with in case of distress. I will not be sure, but I believe it was a four-pounder. The captain eyed it, and meanwhile the passengers stood about in a flutter of expectation. This was an incident with a vengeance, possibly the like of it before at sea had never happened. It is true I had been able to make out that the imprisoned animals had broken from their cages, but who was to tell that there was not more live stock, malignant and deadly to any one desiring to examine it, in a half-deck or 'tween-deck, in any structure they may have provided for the berthing of the beasts below ?

Of course the idea of sinking the barque with that four-pounder, as I may call the gun, would not have occurred to Captain Bowser, but for the fortunate circumstances of the first master who took command of the *Glendower* having laid in a quantity of ball. This was unusual. Few merchantmen went to sea with cannon-balls on board. That master, however, as was well known in the employ, had been slightly eccentric, and it was his pleasure to fire round shot at anything floating, dangerous, in his opinion, to navigation. He met with so few wrecks during the time he had command of the *Glendower* that he arrived home with his munitions of war scarcely broached. But the ball that he had laid in still remained, and Captain Bowser, who by this time had made up his mind, told me to send the boatswain aft to him.

I very well remember that boatswain. His nose was a little broken and lay on one side, but his face was my ideal of a Jack Salt nevertheless. He curled his whiskers, and

stood about six foot, and he was a good seaman, and knew the ropes as a master-rigger, and the spars as a mast-maker. He came aft, brown and sweating with some toil that was going on forward. His mighty arms were bare to their elbows, and the ladies looked with varying sensations at the singular devices upon those hairy limbs. Yes, he knew where the ball was stowed. Yes, he thought that two or three shot would about do her business for her. Yes, he understood the loading of guns and the firing of them off, and so the command of the boat was given to him. A tackle was got on to the cross-jack yard-arm, and the gun, carriage and all, was swayed over the side, and they contrived that it should sit in the boat with its muzzle a little depressed over the bow.

It was all very interesting, and even as the gun was lowered into the boat, amidst the yah-ho's and hoo-ha's of the merchant seamen, for mercantile Jack will have his song, the lion showed himself in lonely majesty upon the heel of the bowsprit of the barque, and he seemed to watch us. The excitement was general. The passengers came together in a crowd about the captain and Mr. Pinch, and drawing a little apart I signed to Belle with a look, and she approached me. Had I not earned the privilege of a talk with her, I who had been doing duty during my watch below?

I drew a lively picture of the deck of that barque. The lion, if left afloat, would not starve for some days, but it was not every captain who would stop and despatch it by sinking the vessel or shooting the poor brute from the bowsprit, if he had a rifle to kill it with.

"I cannot understand why there should have been only one monkey on board," said Belle.

"I expect," I answered, "that he is a tame monkey that belonged to the crew. If there are others on board they are below, and I should not be surprised if the 'tween-decks of yonder barque are not full of starving, perishing,

wretched, savage creatures, much the same as those which have burst out and eaten each other up, leaving the lion lord of the feast."

"It is a dreadful fancy," said Belle. "It is merciful of Captain Bowser to drown them."

"How finely that animal holds the command he has gained," said I, pointing to the brute, whose shape was perfectly visible as it stood apparently watching us. "He is superior to our whole ship's company. You would not get the crew, the whole of them, in an armed body to go on board that vessel."

Just then, a couple of pistols having been handed into the boat, the boatswain shoved off; the four oars rose and fell in lines of gold, the white foam of the sea darted and expired with the rush of the breeze. The swell had slightly increased, and it was quite certain from the active motions of the light barque that it would have been impossible to sink her by augers from outside. I heard the captain and the mate speculating about her. Pinch thought she might be from Rio, with a consignment of wild animals for Liverpool. Bowser seemed in doubt. Had he fallen in with her on the other side of the Atlantic, the presence of the lion would have been explained by the coast of Africa. Old Mrs. Trevor set up her Judy note whilst the boat was making for the barque.

"I tell you what, madam," said old Bowser, annoyed by her free speech, "if you will consent, I'll order the boatswain to tow the lion, when it is in the water, alongside, and we'll sling it aboard."

"Oh, you monster!" shrieked the old woman, with a hideous grimace of terror.

"We have not sailed in your ship to be devoured by lions," said Captain Lepper in his floating manner, large but timid.

But now a silence fell upon us all, for the boat had come to a stand within a few of her lengths under the barque's

quarter. The lion roared ; its note swept in a low thrilling tone of thunder through the breeze. It vanished, then reappeared at the bulwark rail opposite the boat and again and again sent forth a roar of defiance. The monkey sat upon our forecastle rail, and gazed at the scene as intelligently as any man in the crew. He was no doubt happy to find himself once more amongst people who walked on two legs, and who looked like relations. Mr. Goring came to me, with his insipid, lifting leer, and said :

"Has it occurred to the captain, d'ye think, that there may be living people aboard that barque?"

"There are none," I answered. "The empty davits give you the story, but even if the barque had her boats and the crew remained, they would have long since found a tomb in that lion's stomach."

"It is quite conceivable," said Mr. Goring, "that when the beast broke loose, some of the people rushed below and hid themselves."

"You must talk to the captain about it," I said, disturbed, without being satisfied by his notions.

At that moment the boatswain let fly his gun. Flash ! Mrs. Trevor squeaked. It was a noisy piece and still the noble lion, with forefeet planted upon the bulwark rail, roared defiance. We could see the boatswain re-loading, and again he slapped a round shot into the hull, just at the water line, where she would suck it in with every dip aft. He sent four shot in the barque's run, and no doubt the ball ploughed through and through the fabric. Then he rowed round to the bows, and before he could sponge, load and discharge a shot at the bow, the lion had taken up its sentinel post on the heel of the bowsprit, and sent its noble, scornful message of thunder at the boat, which hung a little distance off, and was therefore visible to it.

In all, the boatswain flashed six shot with great judgment through that barque. A four-pound shot will spring

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a big leak in a ship, and it was not long before we saw that the barque was settling.

We kept our main-topsail to the mast, and the boat hung lifting and sinking with the swell midway betwixt us and the foundering vessel. Belle stood beside me, and the general excitement was deep; even among the old seasoned tars forward it was deep. A drowning ship is always a sad sight to witness. She is a thing of sentience; she is "propertied" by the spirits of the winds; she is spiritualized by the cradling of the deep. Something human is in the appeal she makes as she goes. But I found a quality of ghastliness also, for that little beggar Goring's notion ran in my head, and I thought, but did not say, it would be terrible if three or four human figures should fly up on deck, driven from their hiding-places by the water, and if the lion rushed upon them, as he certainly would, and tear them to pieces before our eyes. Thus, you will suppose that I viewed with thrilling interest the sinking of that barque *Anne Bonny*.

I don't know how long it took to despatch her; it was a wearisome time; she sank strake by strake, a little down by the stern. I thought by the conduct of the lion that it was growing sensible of its danger, until a cry sent my gaze to the bark's mizzen rigging, up which a huge serpent was endeavoring to make its way. The captain, through his glass, pronounced it to be a boa-constrictor, and one of the largest of the kind he had ever seen. "But not so big as a drain pipe," said he.

A boa-constrictor in the rigging, and a lion on the fore-castle, and the ship going down! Great heavens! I did earnestly pray that nobody had locked himself away for refuge down below. She heeled suddenly, and sank slowly. Strange was the spectacle of her yards, masts and canvas descending to the surface as though drawn down by some gigantic hand beneath. The serpent had apparently involved himself in the rigging, and was sucked be-

low by the vessel ; anyhow we saw no more of it. All that survived when the trucks of the doomed ship hovered for an instant on the salt snarl of the sea, as we expected, the swimming lion.

It was no longer a noble sight. It was pathetic only. It was a small, dark, plastered head, and the mighty breast of ocean girdled it. It seemed to me to swim very badly—rather wildly, coming for us, then heading away and so revolving. I do not think that the legs of the lion enabled it to swim well. This sovereign of the forest never roared once whilst in the water. I seemed to see its face, which was an imagination, and grieved over the splendid, burning, dying eyes, and the nostrils dipping in the seas which ran graceful as bending flames. The boatswain went straight in chase, the oars flashed, the little fabric foamed, she was speedily alongside the swimming brute. I saw the boatswain lean over the gunwale and put a pistol into the lion's ear, and before the report reached us the dark head vanished, and the boat was alone.

"I should have been glad to save it. These jobs are not to my taste," said the captain, and he stepped aft out of the way of the passengers, and stood waiting for the boat to come alongside.

But for my part I shall be wondering to my dying hour whether something *more* than parrots and monkeys and the like had been boxed up below, and had gone down with that bark, the *Anne Bonny*.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GREAT SEA-SERPENT.

It was a fine night, and the moon shone brightly, and I do not think there was air enough to run even an instant's shiver into that mighty mirror of ocean. Wordsworth says : "The moon doth with delight look round her when the heavens are bare." And by this I presume he means that in the silver showering of the satellite, which fills the blue ether with silver mist, the stars faint out. The moon this night was as glorious as any that the poet ever beheld, but certainly the heavens were not bare. The stars were many, and those that were clear of the mist of the moonshine were radiant ; some of them crown gems of the heavens. You glanced off the yard-arms and seemed to see the diamond, and the emerald, and the ruby, all flashing perfectly, and you thought of a hymn of praise up there in those marvelous heights. And clear of the moon too, the meteor sailed in state, a thread of light.

I love the dying lights of those delicate beautiful fireflies of the summer skies. They flash into a smoke of sparks, and scar the soft deeps with a sailing line of throbbing luster. The breathless breast of the deep sparkles back their larger leap into life, and I have seen a meteor light up the moonless sea to the recesses of the horizon.

I came on deck at eight bells, and observed these things, and much more, for our ship was a picture of beauty, and sat motionless in her raiment of moonlight. The shadows were startlingly vivid upon the white planks. They were the things themselves. In the squares of the pictured rat-

lines upon the deck you could have painted imaginations as in frames, though now and again the frame would have swung away from your sketch ; for the sea has a trick of holding her breath for a space, then heaving a sigh, which comes in a gentle fold, the sails swing in and out with a pleasant noise of rain, a moment's life is in the ship, and then she sleeps again with the sea.

The awning was furled, and the poop from the break swept with the whiteness of the freshly-peeled almond in the moonshine to the wheel. Most of the passengers were on deck. This was a night to fall in love with. The deep rich sentiment of the sea would abound under so fair a moon, and under such ripe and shaking stars. You would listen for the voices of the deep ; for the sounds which sweep from spirit lips through the trances of the calm ; you would look for the lights of the sea ; the mystic lamp which burns at the yard-arm, within whose green and sickly zone of sheen the startled mariner has been known to catch a sight of a pale unearthly face.

Much in this way did my thoughts run whilst I stood at the head of the poop ladder, turning a slow eye upon the sea and over the people upon the poop. I did not see Belle, nor did I hear her. I was to be on deck from eight till midnight, which is called the first watch, and I wondered if I should have an opportunity to enjoy a sweet, secret conversation with the pet of my heart, down in some shadow painted by a sail, when Captain Bowser had gone below for a glass of grog, and when Mr. Pinch had strolled aft, as his habit was when the skipper left the deck. The glory of the moon lay in a great stroke of light upon the sea, and whilst I was admiring this beautiful picture of ocean, full of slumber and the peace which passes all understanding—for the like of it is not to be felt ashore, no, not in the stillest night, and in the deepest heart of country—I suddenly noticed a black shadow moving across the breathless wake of the luminary. I thought at first it was a boat, but

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it continued to measure the span of that bed of splendid light, and as no boat could have done anything of the sort, I was greatly startled, and stared amain. *For could it be—*

A loud voice rang through the ship from the fore-castle.

"There's something a-swimming across the light of the moon in the water."

Then in a breath you heard all sorts of cries.

"Good gracious ! I see it !"

"What on earth can it be, captain ?"

"Oh, Captain Lepper, quick with that binocular glass, if you please."

The whole poopful came to the rail close beside where I was standing.

"I have lived to see it at last !" said Mr. Cox.

"What is it ?" asked the hot-tempered Mr. Johnson.

"*What is it ?*" cried Cox with contempt. "Shall I call it a moving bog ? What is it, but the great sea-serpent !"

The black length of it was stemming out of the wake of the moon, and when it was clear of the icy edge of the stroke of glory in the sea, it was as visible as before, and we traced it in its length of dye upon the ashen surface.

"It shows a head as big as a cask," said Mr. Pinch, who was working away through a telescope. "I am now going to believe in the sea-serpent."

"That's no sea-serpent," said Mr. Goring contemptuously. "You'll find it is a line of trees in the grip of a current, and what Mr. Pinch takes to be a head is nothing but a trunk."

Nobody laughed at this joke. He was an unseasonable little man, always thrusting in without regard to tune, time, or keeping, and he was irritating, because he very often said what was true.

"What are you all looking at ?" here burst in Mrs. Trevor.

"At the great sea-snake, the wonder of the world!" cried Captain Lepper.

"Where—where? Point—point, that I may see it!" she squalled. "Is it approaching the ship, captain? Are we in danger?"

"I believe Mr. Goring is right. There will be no need, Mr. Pinch, to log it," said Captain Bowser.

We strained our eyes, but the shadowy object was fast dissolving in the darkness that deepened upon the sea the further the water swept away from the column of moonlight. Old Bowser, afraid, perhaps of Mrs. Trevor, went aft. Pinch and the rest stood staring and arguing.

"Do you mean to tell me," said the mate, "that any surface current which does not cause a ripple in the surface there, is going to carry that thing out of sight at *that* rate if it were dead trees?"

"Yes," said Mr. Goring, with an aggravating simper which the moon fully exposed. "A three-knot current would do it."

"You'd see the streak of the stream in the reflection of the moon. Didn't you hear the man tell you that?" exclaimed Mrs. Trevor. "I've lived eighty-five years without a sea-serpent, and I'm not to be imposed on now," and she screeched a few notes of laughter, and shook her head at us.

Pinch crossed the deck, and now Belle came out of the cabin, and seeing a crowd, approached us.

I told her what we had seen, and what we were still trying to see, and she slipped her hand into mine, and laughed at me.

"You may believe in ghosts, but not in the sea-serpent, Walter," said she.

"Everybody on deck saw it; it was a long black line, with a head like a cask; it rapidly crossed the light of the moon, and was therefore in motion, Belle."

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"No, no," said she laughing, "do not believe in such things, or in the mermaid."

Meanwhile a group of passengers hard by were arguing hotly on the same subject.

"Look down there," said I to Belle, pointing over the side. "What is the depth of the water here? Something beyond imagination. If the grave keeps its secrets, don't you think that the ocean does? There is a life at the bottom of the sea, which never will be discovered by man; creatures, as frightful and huge as the monsters which are conjectured into terrifying pictures of nature in pre-Adamic times by naturalists out of a single mammoth bone. I am not going to say that what we saw *was* the sea-serpent, but, depend upon it, something answering to what landmen consider a myth has had and still has being, and I hope the day may come when the land-lubbers, gazing at the mighty skin which should measure the altitude of St. Paul's Cathedral, will confess, no matter how reluctantly, Belle, that the sailors aren't such blooming liars after all."

"Snakes big or little are not good enough to talk about," said Belle. "What a heavenly night! We are not moving. I expect our voyage will be a long one."

I noticed whilst she spoke she constantly sent her gaze in the direction of Captain Bowser who was walking a little space of the poop alone. Her face was as fair as ivory in the moon; so clear was the light, I could mark each play of expression in her mouth, and her eyes, each with a diamond of moonlight in their violet depths, spoke to me, and caressed me, and looked love. Never deeper is the magic of a woman's eyes than in moonlight.

"Mr. Longmore," called Mr. Pinch from the other side of the deck.

I instantly went to him, but Belle accompanied me, and before he could speak she exclaimed: "I know what you want; you desire to break up our happy little conversation

on a beautiful night. It is ridiculous, Mr. Pinch, that the officers of a ship should not enjoy the privileges of passengers. What do you want him for? There is nothing to do, there is no need to turn the yards or brace them about, as you call it. There is no air."

"I wish there was," said Mr. Pinch in a voice of lazy astonishment, surveying her as though at a loss. "It is Mr. Longmore's watch on deck. How is the duty of a ship to be carried on if young ladies accompany those who are called, and prohibit them from receiving instructions?"

"What instructions can you give on so heavenly a night!" she cried.

"I presume such trifling matters as the side-lights and the binnacle lamps are of no importance," said the mate folding his arms, whilst I, inwardly shaking with laughter, dreaded some violent and dangerous expression of my mirth every minute.

"You should save your oil when you have such a lovely moon to light you by," said Belle. "And now," she added very coolly, "you must really dispense with Mr. Longmore's services for a time, as we are going aft to converse with the captain whilst he is alone. Come along, Walter."

She held me by the hand. The start I gave could not have escaped Mr. Pinch.

"What do you want to say to the captain, Belle?" I asked.

"It must be settled, and it shall be settled," she answered in a tone of decision. "It is too bad, Mr. Pinch, knowing as you do that Walter and I are engaged to be married, and will be married after our arrival in Sydney, that you never should lose an opportunity to intrude upon our conversation when he is keeping his watch on deck."

"If that's what you're going to growl about to the cap-

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tain, Miss Stuart," answered the mate with a surly laugh. "I shall be glad to hear what his answer is."

"All this is very irregular, Belle—really, my dearest," I stuttered, for I could see that Pinch was beginning to lose his temper. He did not like me to stand by and hear Miss Stuart talking to him with a frankness he would not understand; on the other hand, she was a passenger, and he must be civil, and very careful in the management of his courtesies, not to her only, but to them all, because it was not a tradition, it was a fact, that a single complaint lodged against a mate by a passenger sufficed to ruin him professionally.

"Come along, Walter," said Belle.

"Go with her, sir," exclaimed the mate.

We were on the side of the deck which was occupied by the captain. It was sacred ground to such as I. Sailors will appreciate the feelings with which I advanced along those moon-whitened planks, hand in hand with Belle. She had a very conquering spirit, however, and only laughed and said "Come on, dear," when I begged her to tell me what she was going to say to the captain. He had seen us talking to the mate, and he perceived us coming, but feigned to observe the sea. His right hand grasped the vang that steadied the spanker-gaff, and nobody was within earshot save the man at the wheel.

"Captain Bowser," said Belle.

He pretended to start, and answered quickly, "What is it, Miss Stuart? Why have you come aft here, sir?"

"You are alone, but you seldom are," said Belle. "It is almost impossible to get in a word with you, what with Mrs. Trevor and the others."

"Yes, that is all right," answered Captain Bowser, "but what does the third mate want aft here?"

"He is my companion, and something more, and I have asked him to escort me aft," exclaimed Belle, drawing her-

self erect. "You *do* know by this time that Mr. Longmore and I are engaged to be married."

"Well, but that must not interfere with the third mate's duties and the ship's discipline," answered the captain.

"It will not, sir," I said warmly.

"You are not here to speak but to listen," said Belle. "I want you, Captain Bowser, to recognize our engagement, so that the rest of the passengers may be made to understand it, and then if it should happen that I am talking to Mr. Longmore in his watch on deck, Mr. Pinch may think proper not to intrude by needless calls and orders, invented merely to separate us."

I could see that the captain had a hard job to keep his face, and would have laughed out had he been alone with her.

"You will please consider, Miss Stuart," said he, "that as regards my sanctioning your engagement, as you put it, you were consigned to me for safe-keeping, and it's my duty to deliver you" (and now he began to smile) "to the consignee in good order, full weight, and so forth. It's not for me to sanction your engagement. Stop till you arrive at Sydney, and introduce the gentleman to Mrs. Riley."

"Your sanction is necessary," said Belle, laying her hand upon his arm, with a most irresistible gesture, "because if it is understood that you know we are going to be married, we shall not be interfered with in Mr. Longmore's watch on deck, unless, of course, something urgent calls him to help aloft or elsewhere."

The captain suddenly turned upon me, who stood like a tall fool in the most absurd position the dear girl could have placed me in.

"Were you engaged to this young lady before you came on board?" he asked, not choosing to remember anything I may have told him or he may have heard from Belle,

"No, sir."

"You have fallen in love and proposed to her since you have been in this ship?"

"We were playmates as little children," I exclaimed.

"Now, Walter," said Belle, "I have exactly told Captain Bowser all about the apparition in the pond, and how you knew me from the likeness of my phantom. But he has no more sentiment—even on such a heavenly night as this! Captain Bowser, you have no more sentiment than a turtle."

"My business is not sentiment, but to see you safe in the hands of your aunt, and I wish you were there," said the captain, with whom this conversation was beginning to disagree. In fact, Belle's sweetness was generating acidity in him. I felt that enough had been said.

"I think it is very likely," said Belle, "that Mr. Longmore will leave the ship at Sydney."

"Oh, indeed!" said Captain Bowser, dully staring through the moonlight at the sea.

"Therefore," she continued, "what is the good of his working and keeping watch during the few weeks which remain? I do not think this ship, or any ship, requires a *third* mate. A first and second are quite enough. If the seconds were all like Mr. Curling they would be too much. You have but to say the word, Captain Bowser," said she, adopting a sweet, caressing voice, "and Mr. Longmore becomes a passenger."

"Yes, it would be very nice, wouldn't it?" responded Bowser, with forecastle sarcasm. "We don't do business in that sort of way in deep water, Miss Stuart. Passengers pay. Sailors are paid, and must work——" he was proceeding. She interrupted him scornfully.

"Sailors are paid!" she cried. "He gets one pound a month, twelve pounds a year. I wish the owner of this ship could be forced to live upon it!"

"Pray, Miss Stuart," said Bowser, swelling his waist-

coat and speaking sternly. "What is the object of this conversation? What do you want?"

"I want you to sanction our engagement," she answered.

"It is no business of mine," he exclaimed, frowning at me. "My duty is to hand you in safety to your aunt."

"I want you to release this gentlemen from his work," said Belle. "He's certain to leave the ship at Sydney, and it would be tyrannical to keep him at hard labor after you know that he intends to give up the sea."

"Is that your intention, sir?" Bowser asked me.

No young sailor, who was an officer too, was ever placed in a more ludicrous, bewildering situation than this. The master of a ship is God Almighty, you must not approach the deck he walks on. His powers are enormous, and he can lead you the life of a devil in a worse hell even than Satan's, if he once starts to ride you down, as they call it. My instincts were essentially dutiful. I quite understood the difference between a captain and a third mate, and wondered that he should continue the conversation.

Perhaps he was more good-natured than I imagined. Yet Belle in her free discourse with the skipper might easily fill the rest of the voyage with serious difficulties for me. Nor could I clearly understand her object in taking Bowser into her confidence; but I must stand by her, let the issue be what it might.

"If you will give me my discharge, sir, I shall leave the ship," I said in reply to his question.

"I don't think you will then," said he, with a short troubled laugh that betokened mischief. "You can go forward, sir. And I must really ask you, Miss Stuart, not to interfere with the officers of this ship whilst they are executing their duty in their watch on deck."

It was a direct order to me, and off I went. Had I faltered he could have clapped me in irons for insubordi-

nation. But in any case further conversation would have been impossible; the passengers had grown weary over arguing about the sea serpent, and were spreading about the deck, and Mrs. Trevor and one or two others were making for the captain, when I crossed to the port side and went along to the head of the poop ladder. It was still as bright as daylight. The motionless atmosphere was showering with light, and a wide piece of ocean was a bed of sparkling splendor.

Young Boyton seeing me standing alone came along. It was a surprising contrast of effects to see his figure faint with silver and his shadow moving with him like liquid ebony. He wanted to talk with me about the sea-serpent, and I should have been glad to discuss the subject with him, for here was a midshipman making his first voyage, and before he had crossed the line he had seen the sea-serpent! This experience alone was worth more than the premium his father had paid. But I was in no mood to talk with him. The little beggar's eyes glistened brightly and yearningly, but finding me silent, he joined the other midshipmen on the quarter-deck.

I saw Belle standing alone near one of the starboard quarter boats. The passengers were gathered about the captain, and two or three mooned aimlessly about the decks. The spirit of the night seemed to lie like a benediction upon these people, and even Mrs. Trevor's voice was subdued. At long intervals you would hear the noise of some pinion of canvas languidly stirring high aloft; it would fall to the deck in a note of a sigh, and a sob of water would answer it alongside. All was glory, beauty, freshness, and the presence of God.

A little while before the bell summoned the passengers to their grog and biscuit, Belle came walking slowly forward. I earnestly hoped that she did not mean to come round the skylight and join me. Pinch was on the starboard side of the deck, leaning against the rail with his

arms folded, and staring straight up into the sky as though he saw something falling. Belle stopped when she was at his side, and began to talk to him. I could not catch a word. Sometimes a rumble of good-natured laughter broke in from the mate. Then I heard him say. "Oh yes! oh yes! I don't think the captain would very much object, but mind you don't let him catch you, or you'll plunge that sweetheart of yours into a mess."

Presently nearly everybody went down to get some refreshment and drink, amongst them the captain. Belle stayed. Mr. Pinch walked right aft, and occupied the captain's post of honor. The moment old Bowser vanished, Belle came gliding close to my side.

"Mr. Pinch will not pay any heed to us talking, Walter," said she.

"I heard him say so," I answered.

"He is rather better natured than the captain," she said. "This proves what perseverance may do. Could you have believed that Mr. Pinch would give us leave to talk in your watch on deck?"

"It is wonderful!" said I smiling at her fair, sweet face, and thinking of the phantom countenance I had seen crowning the visionary figure on the fountain pedestal, and I also thought to myself, this charming girl scarcely knows that her perseverance may end in causing the captain to break me, and send me to live forward.

"The instant the captain appears," said she, "I shall fly down this ladder,"

"What made you take me to him, Belle?"

"I want him to make you a passenger."

"It is impossible. I doubt if he would," I answered, "even if I paid—but I can't pay, and so there's an end."

"I thought you said that the powers of a captain of a ship were enormous, and absolute."

"So they are."

"Well, let him make you a passenger then."

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"Ay, but he *won't*, you see, Belle, and remember that he's answerable to his owners."

"Oh, don't let us think of his owners," she exclaimed. "I am determined to try, at all events, to make a cuddly passenger of you. Why should you go on living in a wretched den down-stairs? I am certain that the captain is to be persuaded into allowing you to live in the saloon."

I shook my head gloomily, for naturally the brighter the picture, the gloomier would be the shade I made at it.

"We could then be always together," she continued; and nothing prevented me from kissing her then but the presence of three young midshipmen, who were watching us at a little distance. "We could sit side by side at table. How fast and pleasantly the days would pass. I should not want them to end too soon," she exclaimed, smiling at me. "No more degrading watches on deck or watches below, and dragging sails up on poles, and binding them with pieces of cord into umbrellas. You must not forget, Walter, that you have given up the sea."

"I must find a berth in Sydney," said I.

"Don't trouble about that," she exclaimed.

"I love you very much, Belle, too much to wed you to poverty. The sea is my career, and I have very little to expect from my parents."

"You will become a passenger," she said, laughing.

In fact, she understood me. She saw that I was nervous and embarrassed through having been brought into contact with the captain.

"I think," I said, "I had better remain third mate until we get to Sydney."

"Oh, no," she exclaimed, with a touch of petulance, "it is to be done, and therefore it shall be done. I'll take old Mrs. Trevor into my confidence. I am sure she will understand our case, and pity us. I wish she wasn't so deaf; but I'll talk to her in her cabin, with the door shut, and

perhaps the ship may be groaning, and then we sha'n't be overheard."

"If you set old Mrs Trevor at the captain, Belle," said I—but as I pronounced the words, his jolly round face, pale in moonshine, rose in the companion-hatch.

"The captain, Belle," I whispered, and she whisked like a mouse down the poop-ladder, on to the quarter-deck, and entered the cuddy by the door there.

Hush! what was that? It was startling, though no more than the sudden rude awakening of the ocean from its trance, by an invisible heave of silver swell, which took the sails of the sleeping ship, and brought them roaring like a park of artillery to the masts. Another and another, and another! A steward coming out of the cuddy with a trayful of glasses, fell into the scuppers, and cursed and swore. A cock began to crow, and then a second. In the far north-west, towards which the silver ball of moon was making, the shadow of wind was visible, and out of it as it came, rolled a swell of the sea. The breeze smote us in a flash of moonlight, and damp night wind of squall-like weight. The ship filled fair with a whirl of her spokes, and then followed the cries of the captain and the officer of the watch. The yards were braced up a little, for the skipper clung to his westing. The sea showed like gray smoke, with the broken strokes of the moon in it, and the scud coming up fast over her; with a plentiful noise about the deck of bawling men.

"A small pull to windward!"

"Well all!" And the leaning ship snared aslant through the night, taking the swell as the horse takes a hurdle, and the foam of the sea rushed from her in a glorious trouble and tremble of foam and fire.

"Clew up the mizzen-royal and furl it! Clew up the fore-royal and furl it, Mr. Pinch!"

"Sir."

"Get your main-royal furled, and your flying-jib hauled

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down, and then let the watch haul the main-sail up and furl it."

"Ay, ay, sir."

These were orders to keep us skipping, but they also signified an increasing weight of wind. The swell was the precursor of weather, and by midnight it was blowing fresh, the scene of beauty gone, rags, shreds and tatters of cloud thickening with the night over our mast-heads, and I did not get below until two bells, because when midnight had been sounded, all hands were kept on deck to reef top-sails.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SHIPWRECK.

I DO not think that Mrs. Trevor would have succeeded in persuading Bowser to make a cabin passenger of me. Neither do I think that the old lady (who was no fool) would have given herself any trouble in the matter ; but I certainly did fear that if Belle pursued her resolution to bring me aft into the cuddy, she would end in causing me to be sent to do a man's work before the mast, where I should be as effectually cut off from her as though I had been in another ship.

But the curtain was now about to rise upon one of those sudden, terrible tragedies and horrible surprises of the sea, which people read about in their newspapers but utterly fail to grasp. One in ten millions of our sea-going not sea-faring population survives, and in his sleep he repeats it in nightmares.

Belle was no prophetess. Could she have foreseen what was going to happen just beyond the rim of the horizon ahead, the dear heart would not have troubled herself to scheme my removal from the midshipmen's quarter to the saloon ; she would have left it to the black angel, who stands on the left hand of man.

I have said that Captain Bowser had put a great deal of westing into his course. I will not go into the matter in this age of steam. I should not be understood. I should be talking Dutch to explain the various theories of the captains of my time as to the passage of the equator ; how some cut it here, and some cut it there, and every man

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knew best. When the marine steam-engine came in, the trade winds went out. We no longer think of a large ship, full of passengers, homeward bound in the northeast, trades-studding sails set, and the bright copper staring ruddily through the foam. No; trade or no trade, the straight course is for the straight stem, and the threshing screw. The night has descended forever upon a spacious, romantic, and beautiful canvas of sea. Another sun has risen, and it shines upon the greatest marine transformation scene it ever lighted up.

Whether our westing gave us the strong winds we found, and Bowser looked for, I do not know; it is certain that the zone of splendor and tranquillity proved very heavy weather to us. Not many ships, I venture to say, crossed the equator in a high sea under reefed topsails. The wind blew hard from the northwest. Our bows smote the surge into smoke. The captain stumped the deck with a face of stolid satisfaction, and everybody looked at the wide dazzle of yeast sweeping in glory past the ship's side into a highway of rising and falling wake, and felt that Australia, after all, was only just round the Cape of Good Hope.

It was a Tuesday. The sunset had been a windy glare with the seas rolling in foam out of it, and here and there patches of flying hectic touched the green and crackling hollows. It fell dark suddenly, and our rate of sailing was then about nine knots, and our canvas was a main-topgallant sail set over a single-reefed topsail (and this I write for the information of the sailor, who will know exactly what other canvas we were under). The latitude at noon had been about $2^{\circ} 30'$ S., and the longitude about $33^{\circ} 40'$ W. Our course I do not clearly remember; I believe it was a little to the east of south.

This brought the wind, hard and stormy, well upon our weather quarter, and the ship rushed along, and her race through the deep showed like the flashing stream of

a bursting rocket slanting down the gale. I came on deck at eight o'clock, and found the strong blast charged with wet, but it blew a hot wind, and there was no virtue in the rain to cool it, and instead of sending a young reefer below for my oilskin coat, I buttoned my jacket up to my neck, turned up the collar, and dodged the rain as best I could. Whether the captain and Mr. Pinch were accurate in their reckonings can never be known. I was willing, for my part, as I have said, to put this magnificent wind down to old Bowser's fetching it for us out of the west. Anyway, it was pleasant to be rushing through an equatorial sea with foam to the cathead, and all the trumpets of the northern heights in our rigging. But that neither Bowser nor Pinch was accurately informed of his whereabouts I will swear by this ; no look-out was kept aloft. What land, I hear you ask did you expect the captain to keep a watch for ? If the latitude and longitude were right, the nearest land was Fernando Noronha, about ninety miles distant, well on the port bow, and Cape San Roqua, about a hundred and thirty miles away on the starboard beam ; therefore I am to be told we had plenty of sea room. But look upon the chart of the Brazilian coast, and it shall answer you.

The wet kept the passengers below. I could scarcely distinguish them through the weeping glass of the skylight. Again and again I peered for a sight of Belle, but it was like looking through blinding tears. Old Bowser seemed very easy ; he had left the deck at half-past eight, and was probably playing a game of draughts or cribbage with a passenger. Pinch was an excellent seaman. Bowser could trust him from wool to claws, and he quietly walked the weather deck, pausing at times to send a look to windward at the sullen glares breaking through the flying thickness, or arresting his steps when some sudden gun of wind burst in a wet squall in the topsails, and filled the night with yells of the insane, and the screams of a thousand cats.

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Two or three male passengers came up, but the wet speedily drove them below. The ocean all round was blinking in sea flashes; it was a multitudinous wrangle of light, confused, sickened, often eclipsed by the sweep of the wind full of rain.

At ten o'clock Captain Bowser appeared on deck. He looked into the compass, then came forward to the mate, not apparently to address him, although they exchanged some sentences, but to get a sight of the sea over the bows, under the midnight arch of the forecourse, when the lift and fall brought the line of the horizon square with his vision. A little later he went to his cabin, and the ship was left in command of Mr. Pinch.

It was as black as a boot overhead. The ship was washing along bravely; nine knots is good speed in a sailing ship, and she was doing that then, and, perhaps, more. I was wondering whether Pinch would miss me if I slipped below under the break of the poop for a few whiffs, when I heard a loud and fearful voice shouting on the forecastle. Thrice that roar of consternation swept through the howl of the wind.

“Breakers right ahead!”

“Breakers on the port bow!”

“Breakers on the starboard bow!”

“Hard a-starboard every spoke! Hard a-starboard every spoke!” yelled Mr. Pinch, rushing aft, but before he could approach the wheel, the ship struck, staggered, made a short floating launch, and I heard and felt the bilge rippled out of her, in a soft, awful, rending sound and dreadful thrill in the planks of the deck. She stopped. A strong sea caught her under the starboard counter and drove her yet a few fathoms forward, but the thump of it and the beat of the bows brought down the fore-topmast. The spars, with their massive yards, sails, and rigging, fell aft, and some portion of the wreckage crashed in the waist at a moment when a crowd of men were running along the

deck, and I knew by the cries which arose that many had been struck down.

Now, I quite understood that it was my duty to remain on deck, but I was also determined to keep Belle beside me, so that we might be saved together, or perish together, as it might please God. We carried a number of life-buoys loose on pins, so that if the ship sank the life-buoys floated away, and if a man fell overboard, it was not necessary to leave him to drown whilst you were shouting for a knife. I was in the act of springing for one of these buoys, when I was knocked down by a mob of panic-stricken seamen making for the boats. I jumped up a little dizzy, but unhurt, and heard the captain and the mate shouting to the men; but it was a time of frightful excitement, of every extreme sensation, and that violent conflict and disorder of spirits which lies between life and death. I did not hear what was said, I could only think of Belle and if she was to be saved, and running for a life-buoy, I went away with it down the poop ladder, not choosing to take the risk of being stopped by the captain if I stepped below by the companion-way.

Just as I got to the bottom of the steps the ship thumped heavily three times. I was almost thrown off my feet; the water was flying in white sheets over the weather rail, and when she bumped the third time with a sullen, sickening crash of timbers throughout the length of her, the main-mast went sheer over the side, breaking right off at about the height of the pumps. The bulwarks were split to pieces by the fall of this mighty mass, and the decks were frightfully littered with shrouds and raffle of all description. I had stopped when the main-mast went, then fetched a deep breath, and deadly consternation seized me, for the sight of that main-mast—lofty, with all its yards across, sweeping out of the sky through the blackness in a dim, misty light, and disappearing on my right with the crashing and smashing of the unhappy fragment—was

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awful, unnerving. I was panic-stricken ! These unmanly feelings passed, however, in a minute, and I raced round into the cuddy, slapping through the water which was spitting white over the decks with the wind.

The only person I saw at that moment was Sir Thomas Knight. He stood with his feet and legs set close together and his arms hanging down, and the poor little man was shaking as if he was about to drop dead in a fit.

"Oh, my God, Mr. Longmore !" he screamed, "what has happened to the ship ? Are we in danger ?"

"I don't think so," I answered, making a dash past him down the wide steps that led to the cuddy passengers' sleeping berths, for my heart was raging hot with thought of Belle, and I could think of nothing but her and her life.

Down here the sound of the ship tearing her bottom out upon the rocks was frightful to hear. A woman was screaming in her cabin, and as I ran to the door of Belle's berth Captain Lepper dashed past me, with a drawn sword in his hand, and rushed on deck with the motions and frantic face of a madman. A lamp was burning in this corridor, and I have no doubt from recollection of Captain Lepper's face that he had gone out of his mind.

I made a dash for Belle's berth, and without ceremony flung open the door. A small bracket lamp was burning, and Belle stood in the middle of her cabin, dressed in stays and petticoats, and stockings and boots, and her hair was coiled down upon her head for the night. She seemed by her attitude as though she had been arrested in clothing herself by my entrance.

"I have been waiting for you, Walter," said she in a steady voice. "I knew you would come."

"Let me pass this over your head," I cried, flourishing the big life buoy.

She shrank, and said something about a dressing-gown.

"No!" I exclaimed, "you want no more clothes than you have on. Be quick! don't you feel the ship is breaking up?"

As swiftly as possible, for the noise of splitting and rending timbers down here, the unearthly groanings and roarings in the hold, were enough to heighten the agony of that time into insupportable sensation, I slipped the buoy over her head, secured it under her shoulders, and grasping her by the hand brought her quickly out into the corridor, as I call the passage between the berths. Three or four times she asked me with a little growing wildness in her voice, what was the matter? what had happened to the ship? But my state of mind would not suffer me to answer. It is terrible to feel a vessel going to pieces under your feet, with all the shocking uncertainty of reefs and shoals, and the deadly breaches of the sea outside; and add to this yells of a woman in her cabin! My consuming desire was to see Belle in a boat of which I should have charge. But I had been careful to prepare her for the sea, as I was certain the ship would not hold together another five minutes. Even now I gathered from her motions that the stress and charge of the surge had flung her bow on and stern on to points of reefs or rocks, leaving deep water under her, in which she continued to roll so heavily that I found it difficult to support Belle.

As I was dragging rather than conducting her up the steps I heard a dreadful scream, and on looking I saw Mrs. Trevor at the end of the corridor in a scarlet dressing-gown. Her voice always painful to hear was shocking now with the intensity of her terror.

"Oh, don't leave a poor old woman of eighty-five to die down here alone."

"Damn it!" I muttered through my teeth.

She made several little runs towards us, and I cried, "Come on, Mrs. Trevor. Come on quickly; I'll help you on deck."

But before she could reach the foot of the steps the ship lurched over almost on to her beam ends, and the poor old woman reeled like a sack of grain on end to the cabin bulkheads, which she struck hard ; she fell, and lay motionless.

"I cannot carry her on my shoulders," I cried, savage in my helplessness. "Come!"

But now another figure rushed out of a cabin. This was Miss Parker ; undoubtedly it was she who had been hysterically shrieking, for when she came out there was no more noise of that sort.

"Oh, save me !" she yelled. "Save me !"

"Follow us on deck," I shouted, observing that she was clad only in her bedclothes.

On emerging into the cuddy I was nearly knocked down by Curling, who rushed in. No fear was visible in him in those few brief minutes of pause.

"Any other ladies left below ?" he shouted.

"Oh, God, yes !" I answered. "There's old Mrs. Trevor knocked senseless. Here's Sir Thomas Knight, who will help you to bring her up. I don't know if there are others."

And so saying, and still grasping Belle securely by the hand, and followed by Miss Parker, I passed on to the quarter deck and made for the port poop ladder.

As the vessel rolled the waters swept like breakers of foam to the bulwarks, first to port then to starboard, then to port, then to starboard. Miss Parker kept a hold of me, or she would have been rushed off her feet. I saw nobody on the quarter deck ; but indeed the fall of the main-mast had raised a complete barrier between the fore and after ends of the ship. It was very dark, but there was so much white water in the sea that a kind of light came up, and I saw a number of seamen in the act of lowering the foremost port quarter boat. I also heard the captain frantically yelling to them to come out of it, and

to see the women safe first. It still blew hard, and the beat of the sea was very great indeed against that doomed ship, and it ceaselessly rained, but the wet and the wind were warm, and to that and my resolution to save Belle if possible, I attribute such courage as supported me on that frightful night.

Belle never spoke a word, and Miss Parker hearing the voice of the captain ran aft. I did not see Mrs. Lepper, but her husband was but too visible, for we had scarcely reached the poop when we saw him dart, brandishing his naked sword, towards the mate, who with the captain was urging the sailors to see to the women, to come out of the boat, to do their duty as Englishmen, and so forth. - I believe if poor old Pinch had not turned in the nick of time, possibly invited by a cry to mind his eye, his head would have been cut open by the madam. He dodged. I could then see them in the darkness struggling on the deck and the sword went overboard like a pale gleam of lightning.

"I am God !" shouted the unfortunate Captain Lepper in a dreadful voice, rising on to his feet and going to the rail. "I could have saved you all if you had not thrown away that flaming sword, which," and here he cursed them, "was the gift of a cherubim ! I must recover it, or I cannot preserve you !" and springing on to the rail he leaped into the sea before a hand could be outstretched to grasp him. Belle screamed, but a wilder and more terrible shriek went up from the midst of the shadowy figures who were moving about the captain aft awaiting his measures ; and I guessed by that heartrending cry that Mrs. Lepper was on deck.

My intention was to get Belle into one of the starboard quarter boats, and shout for the women to be brought, and for men to man the boat, and I was determined to command it, whatever the captain's orders might be, for it seemed to me that he had lost his head, and could only rave at his men, who took no notice of him, and so moments

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infinitely precious were being wasted. But before we could approach the boat the ship broke in halves. The sea immediately filled the space between. It raced white and headlong through that ghastly black gaping hollow. Very little noise attended this breaking into halves of the ship. I believe she had ground her bottom and keel out of her, and sank amidships, as you might break a cake. The angle of the poop deck grew steeper and steeper ; it sank into the side of a hill. Two or three people making a dreadful outcry came rushing down, irresistibly urged, and disappeared in the gulf that was just now the quarter deck. At the same instant Belle and I went right *over the rail* into the sea, swept into it as though we had been shot out of a gun.

I managed to preserve my senses sufficiently to enable me to catch a firm hold of the life-lines of the buoy I had secured to Belle, and then to strike out with her in the buoy in front of me, thrusting with my legs, and so swimming as hard as I could to go clear of wreckage, or, which was more dangerous, any drowning people. The sea was very broken, ugly and blinding ; the fine salt rushed off it in smoke, and I feared that Belle would drown in her life-buoy. I could see no signs of land, no deep shadows lofty or low upon the dye of the night indicating a range of cliff or flat sweep of shore. But on three several occasions when I was hove up to the height of a sea I observed that the water about half a mile off in the direction for which we were making, was a wide bed of foam, and I thought that if there was a dry reef anywhere we should find it shelving out of that yeast.

I was a good swimmer, and was of course much helped by the buoy. Several times I called to Belle to know how she bore up, and sometimes she would answer, "I am all right, Walter," and once she said, "Will it be much longer?" It was a dreadful question, for I could not see land, and could only surmise from the character of the

surf that a reef lay in the direction I was making for. If none was there we should die the most miserable and lamentable of all deaths, and our corpses might be floating on the sea up-borne by the buoy when the sun was shining.

Just then I noticed a sudden light, and from the altitude of a sea that swung us to its summit, pouring from us in a thunder of foam as it rushed on in broken and swerving course, I saw that the fore-half of the ship was on fire. Possibly the fore-castle lamp had kindled the beam. Whatever the cause, great flames began suddenly to belch out of the fore-castle hatch, along with clouds of smoke full of stars. The picture thus lighted was beyond imagination hellish. The flames were crimson, and the foam rushed red about us, and the dart of the fire into the flying black sky was like the lightning stroke itself. By this light I saw the poop and stern of the ship as though by day. The slope of the deck was frightful, no man could have used it. In one clear glance I managed to catch, I saw nothing moving.

But my heart was lifted up with delight, and I shouted with joy in Belle's ear, when I saw by the crimson fires of the burning wreck that a considerable stretch of bare island went away out of the snapping and snarling play of surf about it. I say that this sight gave me as much strength as though I had only just now been hurled into the water. I thrust hard with my legs, keeping the buoy with Belle in it steadily in front of me, and the rushes of the sea were as good as a current, for in still water we should never have measured the distance in the time we occupied. The fire was a godsend, and as it had much to feed upon, the flames soon rose in a blaze that lighted up the ocean for leagues, and I distinctly saw some figures moving upon the shoal with a boat which they had managed to haul ashore.

I called to Belle, but got no answer. I called again, and finding her silent, continued to swim with a heart of de-

spair, once or twice touching the reef with my feet. We were now amongst the small broken waters, swift and vicious : there was no depth here for the play of the sea. I was half blinded by the brine blown into my eyes, but managed to discern the figures of people in motion. They were not a cable's length away from me. I shouted, and again I shouted, and by the red light of the burning wreck I saw them looking. They shouted back, but the salt hiss in my ears deafened me ; and it was impossible to hear what they said. But now my feet took solid rock again, and I began to wade instead of swimming. The reef ran in a gentle incline, and I could have waded ashore easily had I been alone, but I was almost certain by this time that Belle was unconscious, and as she could make no use of her feet it would be impossible for me unaided to get her out of the water with that great life-buoy round her.

I shouted : " For God's sake, come and help me to carry this woman ashore ! "

The wind took my voice to the men. Our figures were distinctly visible in the light that was making a noontide of that midnight, and two of the men came slowly through the wash, which was angry and racing, but dangerous only to one nearly spent as I was. I continued to wade, and to thrust my poor, helpless burden before me, and the men approached, and they were not waist high when they caught hold of her. " I said : " Lift her clear, and take her out of the buoy, and lay her down ashore. " They waded with her in their arms, and I followed, and in about five minutes I drew out of the surf and staggered towards Belle, about whose figure the men had gathered. But I was so exhausted that my knees gave way, and I fell on my side, not insensible—but incapable of motion, and breathing with so much pain that I believed my lungs were full of water.

I lay still a few minutes, and recovering my breath

made shift to stand upright. I saw the figure of Belle lying hard by, and two seamen were standing beside her, looking down, and evidently talking about her. They had removed the life-buoy. Their shadows went in wavering strokes from their feet like smoke. Three or four other seamen at a short distance seemed to be keeping an eye upon the sea, and watching the burning wreck. Walking was made difficult by hundreds and thousands of land crabs of all sizes, which swarmed and lifted and crackled under foot.

"Is she dead do you think?" said I, kneeling to look at her.

"I don't see why she should be," answered one of the men. "She ain't been very long in the water. She's swooned."

"Pity a drop of something strong don't wash ashore," said the other man. "That's what she wants."

"And what we wants," exclaimed the first man.

I pulled off my coat, which was wet through, but it was a trifling protection against the creeping crabs. I spread it, and with the help of a man laid the girl upon it, and sitting down by her side rested her head upon my breast, whilst I chafed her hands, and loosened the soaked coils of hair upon her head that the tresses might the sooner dry. My distress of mind was exquisite. I feared she was drowned, and I did not know what to do.

Judge then of the bound my heart gave when I heard a feeble moan escape her, and then a second moan, a little louder; she opened her eyes, and fixed them upon me, and gazed in the tragic crimson of that huge flare upon the reef, like a sleep-walker. The memory of her vision when her spirit face showed close to mine in the pond rushed upon me again. Surely it had not been for nothing that her phantom form had shaped itself upon the pedestal in the moonlight. I could think of nobody but her. I had no thought of those who might be struggling

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in the sea, or who were still left clinging to the wreck. I put my lips to hers, and fondled her cheek with mine, and sought with the love of a sweetheart to caress her into life and speech. I was successful, for presently she said in a feeble voice :

“Are we safe?”

“Perfectly.”

“What is that great fire?”

“The fore part of the wreck is burning?”

“Who is saved?”

“I cannot yet tell. There are a few seamen here belonging to the ship, and they have managed to drag that boat ashore.”

She closed her eyes, and lay against me, and thus it was with us for some time.

The rain had ceased, and some weight had gone out of the wind, but it still blew hard, and the roar of the ocean was like the sound of contending fleets at sea. One of the two seamen rejoined me and said :

“How is it with the lady, sir?”

“She is alive.”

“She’ll be the only one I allow. Why did the captain keep all on a-hollerin’ at us men instead of getting the women into the boats? Any man could have told him the ship wasn’t going to hold together five minutes. A man’s got a right to look out for himself at such a time where no proper orders are given. What rock’s this, sir?”

“I don’t know,” I said.

It was not for me in my pitiable condition to challenge his and his mates’ cowardly and unsailorly act of desertion. He walked slowly down to the lip of the wash, and stood like a longshoreman, waiting for something to be hove up. The half of the ship continued to blaze fiercely, and I prayed that it might court help to us from a distance.

And here I may as well say, for I afterwards knew, that the reef the ship had been lost upon is called the Rocas.

I could see by the fire, which the clouds reflected brightly, that we were on one of two small islands. They showed crimson, but I expected that they would have the whiteness of milk with the dazzle of sand when the sun arose. There were many sunken reefs in the neighborhood, and I knew by the hurry and swift hissing of brine that the water ran shoal all about here. In fact, we had struck the accursed place as though we had steered for it; ten minutes sooner, at our rate of going, the movement of a spoke to starboard or port would have saved the ship, and we should have still been safe and outward bound.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ROCAS.

AT break of day, Belle was sitting by my side. She was young and robust, and had lost consciousness in the water through fear. It was blowing a moderate wind. The red flames were gone, but masses of smoke continued to pour away from the blackened remains of wreck. It was a little cloudy, but it was a fair dawn, and the surge had lost its weight, and thunder, but still there was much foam, heaping, snarling, wrangling over the sunken reefs.

The dawn was ghastly, nor did it need the presence of the wreck to make it so. I saw livid streaks, and death-like deeps, and the sea came black from that tomb-cold tapestry of sky to the foaming reefs. But now the sun rose, and all was revelation, and brilliance, and wonder.

My eye instantly caught sight of two bodies lying close together, down at the wash of the surf, about a hundred feet off. I told Belle to keep seated, and went to examine them. I walked with difficulty, for in addition to innumerable earwigs and crabs, the islands swarmed with a prodigious surprising quantity of black gulls, and other birds, so ignorant of man, that I had to kick them out of my way to advance. Some large birds attacked me fiercely, tossing out their wings and opening their beaks and discharging oil like the booby, and uttering sounds more alarming than the human cry of "Murder." I quieted them by the toes of my shoes, and on arriving at the side of the bodies, saw with deep grief that one was my poor little friend Boyton. He lay in the grasp of the drowned boatswain, who had

doubtless tried to save him. The sight of that poor little boy lying cold and dead, his young spirit, with all its high, romantic fancies and aspirations fled, moved me to the heart, and I sobbed. A little further down the beach I spied another figure. I believed it was a little naked boy, until I stared hard, and recognized it as the monkey we had saved. It was alive, and sat in a posture of contemplation, viewing the wreck. All hands might have perished, but *he* was bound to come ashore.

I looked round me, and my spirits sank into my very feet, when I surveyed that tremendous scene of solitude. Two little reefs in the midst of a mighty ocean, and I did not know where we were! I thought I could distinguish some old wreckage upon the reef in the north. No doubt those shoals had swallowed up many a good ship in their deadly time. Some of the men were wading in the water and rolling a chest ashore. They were seven men in all and by no means the pick of the crew. Three of them had been in the chief mate's watch, and I had often found them sulky and unwilling. With one exception they were Englishmen, I am sorry to say.

Wreckage and cargo were beginning to slowly drift in, and I trusted that something to eat and drink would speedily arrive. I saw an object like a red buoy on a shoal about a quarter of a mile off, and asked Belle if she could guess what it was.

"It looks like a human body," she answered with a shudder.

"Yes, and I'll tell you whose," said I, remembering that the old woman had been clad in a crimson dressing-gown, "it is Mrs. Trevor."

"I hope there are no sharks about," said Belle.

"I am afraid there are then," I answered.

An extraordinary thing now happened. Without any note or signal that I had detected, the whole of the birds on the two reefs, with few exceptions, rose into the air in

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a perfect tornado of wing ; they were so dense that they put out the sun like a cloud. They hung a little as if irresolute, and a few darted to and fro, and seemed to be acting as messengers. With startling abruptness the whole piebald mass separated in two companies, and sailed away in varying streaks of birds, one lot going for the north, and the other about west. When the birds rose, the monkey rushed here and there in paroxysms of terror, shrieking like a bitten ape. He then sat down and watched them disappear with the gravity of counsel mutely gazing up at a judge. The crabs and the earwigs remained, however, nor had the birds taken their eggs with them, but neither I nor Belle were sufficiently sharp-set to partake of this fare. I broke an egg, and did not like its looks. I broke another, and it smelt like a dried haddock. My secret repulsion to these eggs lay in my thought of guano. I had always associated Island eggs with dead penguins, and filth such as they used to fetch away from Ichiboo.

We stood together, looking at the after part of the wreck, the stern of which was cocked high and dry, and the poop-rail submerged. There were no signs of life on board. It was perfectly clear to me that some of the people had clung for a little while to that prodigious steep, and through exhaustion had, one by one, let go, and shot like cannon balls into the foaming waters where the quarter deck had been. Two boats were gone, but one boat was yonder, high and dry, and could be accounted for, and another quarter boat was at the davits. The other probably dangled at its falls, a wreck alongside the mother wreck. The captain's gig remained, high to the visibility of her thwarts, as she hung at her tackles over the taffrail.

We walked to a part of the beach, where the men had pushed the chest ashore, and I saw at once it was the carpenter's chest. Strange that so heavy a parcel should have been the first to strand. I possessed a strong knife,

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with a big blade and little blades, and a gimlet, corkscrew, and the like, and perceiving that the chest was padlocked, I unscrewed the staples and lifted the lid. It was a full carpenter's chest, but it did not seem then to promise to be of any use to us.

The cargo was beginning to show as the tide made in the channel. White cases of iron-clamped wood glanced and vanished; a cask would roll over a reef as though thrust towards us by invisible hands. The half of what we agreed to consider the long-boat came washing along. The wind was now slackening, and the sky clearing, and the light of the soaring sun was like burning needles in the flesh. I pulled out my handkerchief and made a cap of it for Belle to protect her head, and as I was uncovered, and afraid of a stroke, I ripped the lining out of the back of my coat, and tied it round my brow. Belle could not help laughing at the figure I made, thus equipped, but *she* was always sweet and fair to see, no matter how attired.

The heat of the sun began to raise a thirst in us. One of the men said :

"What island's this here?"

I answered for the second time : "I don't know."

"But what's this ocean?" said he. "What's the nearest land? What chance of his life are these here reefs goin' to give a man?"

I replied that the coast of Brazil was about fifty leagues distant, bearing west, but being in ignorance of our situation I did not mention Fernando Noronha.

"What'll be the nearest port?" asked another man.

"Pernambuco, I expect."

"How fur?"

"Oh, as the crow flies, about two hundred and fifty miles."

"Well, here's one boat," said a man pointing to her, "and yonder's more. There's nothing going to come this way to take us off. But how about drinking water?"

And he added with a curse, which made Belle turn her head, that his mouth was full of foam. I told him that it had been raining hard all night, that the island might be full of cavities, and asked him and other man to go and make a search for fresh water. This they did for their own sakes, and not because they recognized my authority. I watched them as they tramped and sweated over the brilliant white sand, which stirred and writhed with land-crabs and earwigs. This island was about five hundred fathoms long ; the one to the north about eight hundred. The whole length of the two, when the sand connecting them was dry, was one mile and three-quarters. A small surf beat upon the beach ; the water shelved so rapidly that there was no depth for any stress of breaker. Away where the wreck was, and all over the reefs, save the dry parts, the water was still an angry popple, with heads of cargo showing, and a topmast was swirling sulkily with yard across, and I saw a dead body floating near it.

Just then two white cases and a cask were rolled up, and the five men waded in to the height of their thighs, and drove the stuff high and dry. I split the cases open with an ax, and found in them tins of preserved meat.

"What's this here ?" said a man, kicking the cask.

"Rum," I answered.

The fellows exchanged looks. The two men who had gone to seek for water were now hallooing. I shouted :

"Have you found water ?"

"Ay, here's a hole full of it. We want a dipper."

With a contrivance in my useful knife I ripped open one of the tins, distributed the contents amongst the men, reserving a piece for Belle and myself, and with the empty tin the seven of us walked to where the two men were standing. We had overlooked the monkey, but he had not overlooked himself. On seeing us setting out in a company as if to march away, he rushed after us. I gave the ugly beggar a piece of corned beef, and to judge

by the way he rolled his eyes upon me, he seemed to eat with gratitude.

The two men had fallen in with a large flat rock pitted with holes, and all the holes, some of which were deep, were full of the rain of the night.

"The lady first !" said one of the men.

This pleased me, and I dipped the can into the pool, and Belle drank. I then handed the can to the men who, one after another, drank with the ferocity of thirst, with the brutal fierceness visible in low types of men when in distress. The can finally came to me and the monkey. I found the water sweet, soft, and refreshing.

"The sun 'ull soon dry it up," said a man ; "and God 'elp us if we've got to wait for rain for another allowance."

"We must settle some plan and get away said I." "Yonder's a cask that will hold this fresh water, and there's food enough to carry us to Pernambuco."

"More's a-coming," said one of the seamen, looking at the surf. "Do you mind loaning that there knife of yours to me ?"

I assented civilly, desiring before all things to maintain friendly relations with these fellows, and taking my knife he walked away down to the rum cask, followed by the others, and at a little distance by me and Belle and the monkey, and amongst them they broached the cask, and took every man a deep drop of the fiery stuff out of the tin.

"Shall I draw a sup for you and the lady ?" said the man with the can.

I declined, and feigned to watch the sea and the wreckage rolling in it, but in reality my eyes frequently sought askant those seven men, and I viewed them with bitter suspicion and trouble. Here was a full cask of rum, and twenty more full casks might wash up before sunset, and the souls of these seamen knew nothing of self-government. They were of a type you do not often meet now in

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these days of the steamboat. Their hair curled, their beards curled, they stuffed their breeches into half boots. Their shirts lay open, and on some of their bare chests you saw in blue ink, crosses, anchors, angels; and one man bore a full-rigged ship upon him; she lay at anchor upon his chest, and the cable went round and round his waist, and disappeared. This had been reckoned as a curiosity on board the ship, and once or twice the man had bared himself for me to see it.

If they got drunk, how would they treat Belle? I said to myself, Shall I drill a hole in the cask in the night and let the stuff flow? And my answer to myself was, They would kill you. Even should other casks come ashore, they would kill you to stay your hand from losing them more rum. After reflecting a little, I called out:

"It's fiercely hot for the lady. Couldn't we eight men turn that boat over and let her sit keel up on those white cases? The lady could rest in the shadow."

The men muttered one to another, and one of them said:

"It might come to our wanting to use that there boat in a 'urry. We are for leaving of her be. There's a mast a-coming ashore, likewise what looks like half the long-boat. There's a tent to be got out of that sail, which will shadow the lady better nor any boat, or if that half boat comes ashore, we could set it on end like a sentry box, and it would give you and the lady all the shelter you'd need."

"You'll want shelter," said I.

"When that sail arrives," was the answer, "we'll make an awning for our boat."

"What are your intentions?" I asked. "I may tell you we are not likely to be rescued by anything passing, not if we were to burn a flare as big as that wreck made, in smoke by day and in fire by night, for a month."

"We ain't had time to think the matter over," said one

of the men. "We must go away for Pernambuco, I allow, but there's no hurry for a day or two, after we have rigged up a bit of shelter."

We walked slowly down to the surf, and the monkey followed us. When I was out of hearing of the men who had gathered about the boat, and were evidently holding a debate, I said to Belle: "I am afraid those fellows will give me trouble. I do not like their idea of lingering on this reef, when, with anything of a breeze, we could fetch Pernambuco in two or three days."

"They mean to stop ashore, and eat and drink and enjoy themselves," she said.

"As long as it lasts," I answered. "And how long is it going to last? Why, early this afternoon the beach will be loaded with cargo."

"Could we not live on that other island until they go away?" said she.

I was touched by the innocence of her question, and answered we should want a boat, we should want food, and those fellows might grow jealous, and follow us, and give us trouble.

"I wish you had let me put on my dressing-gown," she exclaimed; "I feel very untidy. I should not mind you alone, but those men——"

"You look like a pretty young Bouville fish-girl," said I. "What does it matter how you are dressed in a shipwreck? Look at old Mrs. Trevor yonder. Does her crimson gown add to her dignity as she lies there?"

And to change the subject I called her attention to the aspect of the wreck, which was, indeed, a miracle of contrast, for the fore part, though it preserved the harmonious outlines of the *Glendower's* bows, was burned black; the bowsprit and spritsail yard had charred off and disappeared. This part of the wreck looked like a carving in charcoal. On the other hand the after part rose as clear to the day as in any time of the poor old hooker's glory.

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You saw the sand-white plank of the poop, the white stars burning in the binnacle hood, the flash of the glass in the skylights. It was as though the ship was making her final plunge. I reckoned that a distance of about eighty feet separated the two portions of wreck.

"I cannot help thinking," said Belle, "that there are people alive there."

"I see none."

"I mean below."

"No: they all rushed up. You were not very many aft. I wonder that more seamen did not scramble ashore, but you need only look at the slope of that deck to understand why every man and woman, on letting go through weariness, must shoot into the eternity we swam out of." Then, looking at the figures of Boyton and the boatswain, I said: "I should like to bury those bodies. But I don't choose to ask those seamen to help me in anything, for fear of a refusal, and without a spade I could not bury those bodies alone. I could not dig a grave deep enough, long and wide enough to receive them, with a saw or a hammer, and what am I to look for in that carpenter's chest?"

As the sun mounted the heat increased. From time to time the men went away to the rock for a drink, and when they returned they took a nip from the rum cask, but they seemed determined to be moderate, which made me suspicious rather than hopeful. I looked round the sea. From our low elevation the horizon was a shrunken circle. Nothing but the flash of foam broke the continuity of that eternal girdle. The water was a deep blue, and the small seas as they ran trailed the rich lace of bright foam; overhead it was a fair sky with a few white clouds sailing over it. The wind was light, hot, and soft, and the surf out upon the reefs and upon the shore murmured in ceaseless, riddy gabble.

I proved a prophet, because before the afternoon came

much cargo had stranded. Our lading had consisted of all sorts of commodities, and now there arrived, sometimes in lonely dignity, sometimes in wrangling groups, pianofortes, casks of biscuits, cases of preserved meats, casks of sugar, cases of lucifer matches, and by four o'clock the beach of both islands was covered with cases of candles, bottled beer, wine and spirits, fusees, percussion-caps, cheeses, cakes, and, best of all, three casks of fresh water were rolled up. In these days *this* would have been impossible. Water is stowed in tanks, and when the ship goes down the water goes with her. Our casks had floated out along with the rest of the cargo, and when I saw them coming I thanked God.

It is tantalizing to stand beside the sea and watch with expectation the emergence of something her busy, boneless, tormenting white hands will and will not surrender. It comes and then it stays, it comes a little nearer, and is then pulled back. Some sullen breaker in disgust hits it a blow and strands it, and sometimes it is a corpse, and sometimes a worthless piece of wreck, and sometimes a poor seaman's chest. I waited anxiously for the topmast with its yard and sail. It would get hooked, then free itself, and it was very slow in coming.

It came at last ashore, and several of the men at once got upon it with their knives. They cut the sail from the yard, and with sailor's cunning attached a line to it, to enable them to haul it on to the beach. It was the reefed maintopsail, and a big sail. The topgallant studding-sail booms were upon the yard, and I sung out to the men to attach lines to them and run them out of the irons, as there was nothing ashore to serve as stretchers for the tent. This they did, and in about half an hour the sail and the two studding-sail booms were safe on the reef.

Whilst this was doing the half of the longboat stranded almost abreast of the spot where the bodies of little Boyton and the boatswain lay. I did not then, nor can I now

imagine what mighty blow had sheered through that boat. It had crushed the after part into shavings, leaving the fore part intact as we saw it. Such as it was, there it was, but when I said to one of the men, what do you think of tailing on to this boat, and setting it on end?" he answered; "When we have got your tent up, and made a shelter of that there boat for us men, we shall have about done our bit."

As they were willing to set up the tent I stood by with Belle and looked on. They cast the reef points adrift, and having made a whole sail of it, cut it in two. The booms had blocks at the end for the stunsail tacks. The men rove lines through those blocks, and secured the ends to the head of the canvas. They then went to work to sink the booms into the sand, and as there were seven, and they all worked with a will, they made a good job of it. They next pegged the after part of the canvas with pieces of wood brought from the beach. The sail was now run up, and as it spread a very good roof, and dropped plenty of side or wall, it was as sheltering a tent as we could ask for.

I thanked the men, one of whom muttered something, and they all went away to get a drink from the rum and the water-casks.

After they had refreshed themselves they cut out canvas enough to serve as an awning for their boat, and as they had plenty of tools, and plenty of wood for splitting into stanchions, they rigged it up pretty quickly, and I admired their ingenuity.

Whilst they were at this work I cut a piece of sailcloth and covered the bodies of Boyton and the boatswain. I gathered by the light of the sun that it was about six o'clock. The sea was hot in the west, and roamed in lines of blood about the reefs. The dead man that had come with the topmast had sunk, and by this time the lip of the tide had sipped poor old Mrs. Trevor away to her doom of sharks. I counted three bodies on the north island, but

none on the reefs, or anywhere along our own shores. I never could have imagined such a prodigal scene of shipwreck. To be sure, the ship had stowed fifteen hundred tons, and in fifteen hundred tons, let me tell you, there lies a surprising plenty of commodities. Wherever a reef was showing there you saw a cask or a case. The strand of the north island was as handsomely strewn as our own. Amongst the stuff that came ashore was a quantity of passengers' luggage. These consisted of portmanteaux, chests, trunks, painted or chiseled with the initials of the people who had owned them.

Believing that I might find something useful to Belle in this luggage, I went down to the first trunk I saw, and was going to pull it out of the water. It stood a little away from the boat in which the men were still stretching an awning for the night. When I laid hold of the trunk, one of the men called out : "That belongs to us, sir. You're not to touch it until we've overhauled it."

I was startled, but kept cool and answered :

"Very well. But I suppose the young lady has a right to her own luggage if it comes ashore?"

"Which is her'n?"

And they all stayed their hands to send their eyes groping over the beach.

"This don't belong to her," said I, stepping out of the surf. "Anything marked B. S. will be hers. She'll want but a trifle, and you can have the rest, my lads. She needs but a gown, and a hat to shelter her from the sun. That is what I came to seek."

And I walked off to procure some food, and returned to Belle with a bottle of wine, some biscuits, a tin of meat, and a can of fresh water. Indeed this bad wreck had provided us with such a larder as even an alderman could not have grumbled at. I told Belle what had passed between me and the men, and she said :

"What do they mean?"

"Plunder," said I.

"They'll find little enough in my trunks," she exclaimed.

"I fancy," I continued, "those fellows are hatching a design which is not to concern us. I believe had they meant me to take charge of their boat, they'd have come to me, and talked in earnest about going away, and what was to be done. I wish to God we were alone."

"And so do I," said Belle.

I fetched a piece of sailcloth, of which there remained an abundance, to spread in the door of the tent; it would also serve Belle as a rug. We sat down, as children sit upon the grass, and ate and drank. The monkey bore us company. He was an old monkey, and had seen life outside his native forests. I found many hints of a philosophic mind in the expression of his hanging face. He did not roll his eyes with great vehemence, nor was he uneasy, nor did he idly spring about unless frightened. He was a moody, meditative old monkey, and could he have talked, might have diverted us with some queer stories about organ-grinders and sailors' forecastles.

Belle, as you know, was dressed in stays and petticoats, and her thick, long sun-dried hair flowed over her shoulders and down her back. Yet there was no constraint that sensitiveness might inspire. A woman needs to be a lady to manage her conduct nicely under conditions of this sort. But it is true that shipwreck is a great leveler; distinctions are sunk; all are overwhelmed in a common calamity. A boat-load of escaped people may contain four or five women. How do they fare through a fortnight at the hands of the rough seamen? The distress is general, and human nature lays aside all forms, for the specter of death swims in the wake of the boat, and sailors answer the questions of the women kindly, and respect their modesty.

We sat outside the door of the tent, and all at once the air was darkened by birds. They had returned to the

island. They sank in a storm of birds, and the monkey yelled, and rushed in all directions, and shrieked and made hideous grimaces as he leaped over the backs of the gulls. They were so senseless, gross and ignorant, that they fell upon our tent, and tablecloth, and upon our heads, and just as they sank so they stayed, as though that was their place and no other. This was not to be endured, so I went down to the wreck of the long boat, out of which I took a stretcher, and returning with it, I laid about me with a will. The gulls flapped their wings and screamed, poured oil, and made as if to rush upon me with open beaks. But the stretcher knocked them over in all directions, and presently I cleared as much space as I wanted. None of the birds offered to fly away. I had thought the whole cloud of them would desert the island on the top of their rude reception after a long day's fishing, and join their friends in the north. Perhaps they could not credit the evidence of their senses, and required the night to realize.

I may say that we found these birds a greater nuisance than the land-crab. The latter crawled about us, it is true, but not over us, and shortly after the return of the birds, I was surprised to observe that there was not a sign of a crab within at least twenty feet of our tent. Whether they did not relish us because we were alive, or whether, being superior in sagacity to the gulls, they had accepted the full hint of my stretcher, I cannot tell.

I watched with anxiety the men's frequent visits to the rum cask. They also drank freely from bottles of spirits and wine which had come ashore in cases. They continued very active nevertheless. They were particular in hauling high and dry the passengers' luggage, leaving other cargo in the fret of the surf. I observed them pointing to the island in the north; they clearly debated visiting it, and they sometimes looked at the sinking sun. A wide stretch of dry sand this time separated the two islands, but as the tide

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made the shoal would be covered. I fetched a couple of empty cases to serve as seats ; I did not speak to the men, nor they to me. Their manner was most distinctly marked by resolution to have no reference to us. I thought I saw their intentions, but could not understand their motives.

The cases made comfortable seats, and Belle and I sat together, talking about the men and our condition. I found my pipe in my pocket, and a piece of black Cavendish in the other pocket of my jacket. The tobacco was damp, yet I could keep it alight if I should be able to procure fire. I saw that some of the men were smoking, and as I yearned for a pipe of tobacco, I stood up and called out to know if they had such a thing as a light amongst them. One man held up a box of lucifer matches, and came walking my way with uneven steps. I desired that these fellows, drunk or sober, should give Belle a wide berth, and set out to meet him.

"Where did you get these ?" said I.

"There are box-loads," he answered, in a thick, uncertain voice. "They're nearly all spoiled. A few boxes in the 'cart of them are dry."

"Can you tell me," said I, "how long it is your intention to remain on this island ?"

"No," he answered abruptly. "What's the 'urry. There's plenty to eat and drink, and we're 'aving a bully time, and the coast, you say," he continued with a stagger, "is close aboard. No, we haven't made up our minds," and rounding drunkenly upon his heels, he lurched away back to his mates, kicking up the land-crabs as he walked.

The sun sank behind the sea, the stars flashed, and the dark tropic evening clothed the dismal scene of shipwreck with shadow. Pale, close against the line of scintillant froth, lay the piece of canvas that covered the bodies of the boy and the seaman. The mystery and fear of the night were in the scene. Never did the stars seem to shine so high. A little air of wind passed through the gloom,

and the ripples which last night were foaming seas, sang like clear harps as they ran. The black mass of the fore-part of the wreck was sunk in the shadow, the dye of it eluded the eye ; but beyond you saw the fabric of the poop and stern gleaming in hill-like poise. I would sometimes catch my breath when I looked at it, with a wonder as though that mystic dive was some eternal mockery of sculptured rock.

The men, who kept about their boat, began to sing. One struck up, and the seven united in a chorus which was fairly managed, considering that most of them were squinting drunk. But then they had eaten heartily, and they had worked hard and perspired freely, and here were reasons perhaps why the liquor had not speedily overcome them. The chorus swept mournfully away on the moan of the damp night blast ; it roused strange murmurs among the wondering gulls. There was plenty of starlight to see by ; the gulls blackened with a sort of glistening blackness wide tracts of the island, and knowing all those shadows to be birds I gazed at them with a new wonder born of the night. The monkey seemed to listen to the singing of the men. He squatted beside Belle, whose lap he had twice shot into, but he was heavy, and she tossed him out with a little shriek each time. Why he stuck to us instead of associating with the men, I don't know. It might be because I had been the first to notice and to feed him.

Belle and I, whilst the men sang, talked of the wreck, and the drowned ; we recalled the people ; their sudden dreadful extinction made them as unreal to the memory as the visible fabric of wreck was to the eye. This is often the effect on many minds of the abrupt tragedy.

"Walter," said Belle, "what was in my mind last night, do you think, whilst you were swimming with me ?"

"I can't imagine."

"I was thinking," she said, "how my face showed close to yours in the water in the Bouville pond."

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"I too thought of that," said I, looking at her face which was white as ivory in the starshine. "We were preternaturally destined for each other before we were born."

"Is not this like one of Byron's poems?" said she, smiling. "Conrade and his lady? Only she of course would be dark, with black eyes and heavy black hair."

"Byron wouldn't extract much poetry out of these reefs," I exclaimed. "How is he to get sentiment out of land-crabs and earwigs? I wonder what those men mean to do."

They had ceased to sing. Two or three got into the boat. Once or twice a dark shaped faltered towards the cask. On reflection I was willing that they should drink deep. I could ask for no better sentry over them than the spirit of rum.

"What do you think they mean to do?" asked Belle.

I told her that I had not yet formed an opinion. I considered, however, that as they were acting without reference to us, they might be likely at the last to go away and leave us behind.

"And take the only boat?" she cried.

"I will see to that to-morrow," I answered.

"Why should they act towards us with such abominable cruelty, Walter?" she exclaimed.

"Their stopping me from handling the trunk gave me an idea. They intend to plunder the passengers' luggage. I am an officer of the ship. If they took me with them they might fear I would report them on my arrival. Now if this is in their minds they are fools as well as rascals. Why should I object to their plundering the luggage? The booty had better be in their pockets than rotting on these reefs."

"What do they expect to find?" she asked.

"One never knows," I answered, "what a passenger hides away in his luggage. A portmanteau was washed ashore at the Isle of Wight with five hundred sovereigns in it."

"It will be awful to be without a boat, Walter," she exclaimed in a voice low with fear, and looking slowly round her. "What shall we do? How ever shall we manage to get away? We shall die on these reefs, and nobody will know what has become of us."

"I don't intend that either of us shall die on this reef," I said. "We shall not be without a boat."

She evidently did not understand me, but said nothing. I poured some wine into a tin and she drank. I then spread the piece of sailcloth inside the tent, and my coat made her a pillow. I kissed her, and told her to lie down and sleep well, and that I was by her side with a boat stretcher at hand, ready for anything drunk or sober that might come along. I stepped out of the tent, but she called after me:

"You will be unsheltered."

"Sailors are used to being unsheltered," I said with a laugh. "Lie down, Belle, and sleep as sweetly as ever you slept at home."

I then stepped round to the side of the tent which faced the boat, and pulling a piece of sail from the plenty that made the wall, I sat down upon it, folded my arms, and fixed my eyes upon the boat and the figures of some men, who lay wrapped in white sailcloth near it.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE QUARTER BOAT.

I WAS wearied in limb and profoundly moved in spirit, but I was not sleepy. I was overwhelmed by the spectacle of ocean desolation. The solitude was made infinite by the far-reaching stars, and by the smoking look of the dusk at the horizon, and by the innumerable murmur of waters about the reefs, and by that pallid vision of wreck which did indeed show in that light like the very ghost of the *Glendower*.

All sorts of strange sounds broke from the birds sleeping about the island. But the land-crab crawled on the white sand, and his march was silent, unless a number fell foul, and then you could hear them grinding over one another's backs. There would be no moon till late. I saw no motion in the men near the boat, and those in the boat lay still.

Though our needs were common, and the distress of every man as great as another's, yet already, extraordinary to relate, our shipwrecked party had formed themselves into two colonies, and each viewed the other with distrust. I quite clearly saw that the men did not mean to involve me in any scheme they had projected, and thus I judged that they looked upon me as an enemy, one to be watched and to be kept off. Human passion is the same, whether in the populous city or on the barren reef. I have heard of two men who were cast away upon a little island. They had nobody to speak to but each other. So keen was the sense of their desperate condition that, like Crusoe, they

would wring their hands in the misery of their hearts, and gaze with the looks of madmen at that brain-swelling breast of sea, which swept measureless into the sky all around them, yet was never once broken by a sail. But these two could not agree. They fell into arguments about eternity, lost their tempers, and decided upon separating. So one man went to live upon the other side of the island, where he was hidden from his mate by intervening hummocks and hilly ranges. Days passed, months passed. A ship hove into sight, drew close, and sent a boat ashore for water. They took aboard the living skeleton of a man who could scarcely speak. He appeared to have lost the knowledge of words. When they had hoisted him over the side he was heard to mutter: "There is another." On which the boat returned to the island, and the sailors halloed and searched, and arriving on the eastern side they found the remains of a man lying in rags, with his skull resting upon his skeleton wrist. Such is human nature.

The stars wheeled and flashed. A little air would come in fitful dusky moans out of the sea. I peeped into the tent, and saw that Belle was asleep. Then squatting afresh I folded my arms, and dropped off into an uneasy doze. I was startled by what I believed the sound of thunder or the report of a gun. But I did not need this to awaken me, for probably alarmed by the noise, the monkey that had been sleeping by my side sprang upon my knees, and I jumped to my feet in consternation, throwing the alarming brute away.

What could it have been? I stared all round the sea, but saw not the least wink of lightning; there was not a cloud in the sky. I explored the dusky surface of the deep with my eyes in search of a ship, but nothing was visible. Whatever the noise might have been, it had not disturbed the sleepers near the boat and in it, and Belle continued to sleep.

I made up my mind to consider that it had been a little shock of earthquake, and then squatted afresh and dozed as before. Some time between five and six the dawn broke, and I was then awake, and waiting for it. The flash of the sun was the revelation of a day of high splendor and tropic peace. I looked eagerly round the sea, until my eyes going to the stem of the wreck I started. I understood at once the cause of that strange midnight noise. The wreck had slipped some feet off the rock, depressing the stern and lifting the brass rail at the break of the poop above the water-line. The cabin windows flashed, stars of the sun burned in the brass-work, the deck was no longer an abrupt steep, and I stood for some minutes gazing thoughtfully at the boats which continued to hang in the davits.

One body only had come ashore in the night. It lay on the left about two hundred yards distant from where the boy and the boatswain rested under the pall of sailcloth. More cargo had floated on to the beach during those hours of darkness. I noticed a number of pianoforte cases, and large white boxes marked with a cross and the letter "R," of the contents of which I was ignorant. The moment the sun rose all the birds on the two islands, with a few exceptions, flew up into the air with an extraordinary noise. The vibrant sound was like the note of a gong falling down reverberant from the brassy morning sky in the middle of the heavens. The monkey was filled with horror, and fled as before in all directions. It truly seemed as though he was going through a part, for when the birds, having reached a certain height, divided into two clouds, the creature squatted down and watched them sail away with the most mournful hangdog expression you could imagine.

Whilst I stood looking at the wreck a hand was lightly laid upon my shoulder. It was Belle. A woman in her stays is not considered to be dressed, but had this girl

been flounced out in a morning gown of the loveliest pattern at the sweetest price, I should not have found her prettier. I liked the exhibition of her well-turned little feet under her short petticoats. One saw how well made she was too ; there was no padding, no stuffing, no wadding ; all was beauty, and nature and love. Her hair was as dry as hay. The light of the morning was in her eyes, and the freshness of its rose was on her cheeks.

She told me she had slept soundly. I pointed to the wreck and bade her observe how the after part had settled down by the stern.

"How long are we going to remain, Walter ? And what is your scheme if the men should abandon us ?"

As she asked this question, the figures lying near the boat stirred, shed their piece of sailcloth each man as though he had belonged to some kingdom of gigantic grubs ; then they rose, straining their arms and yawning. The others in the boat came out, and the seven men stood around her, carefully looking about them. I forbore to answer Belle's question while I watched them. I then told her to go and sit in the tent, as the less the sailors saw of her the better, and putting on an easy, lounging air I walked over to the men.

They looked uncommonly shaggy and surly and blood-shot in the piercing light, and shifted uneasily, two or three of them even turning their backs as I advanced. I sang out cheerily,

"Good-morning, my lads."

"Good-morning," one or two answered.

"I've come for some breakfast. Do you notice the wreck ?"

"Ay, she's settled a bit," one man replied.

"Are you going to leave this reef to-day ?" said I.

"No," said the man who had last spoken.

"You don't mind giving me and the lady a chance for our lives ?" said I.

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At this those who had their backs upon me turned, and they all stared.

"Why do you ask that question?" said one of them.

"There are two boats left aboard that wreck," said I, "and I should be very much obliged if you would put me aboard in your boat, and help me to bring that quarter boat there ashore."

After a pause, which marked I thought some surprise and confusion in the men, one of them said: "Oh yes, we'll put you aboard, and help you to lower that boat. We'll do it after we've had some breakfast. That'll be to understand by so doing that you and us can shift for ourselves."

"All right," I said, and with all the coolness I could summon, I walked to the wine cases and other cases, and took what I wanted, and went slowly towards the tent.

I could hear the men buzzing in talk. I was now certain it had been their intention to give us the slip, and, thank God, that the wreck still remained to yield me a boat, or our plight must have meant death. As third mate of the vessel I had no particular knowledge of the commodities she carried. I had not helped to stow her. As I have said, I was simply a senior midshipman, in receipt of a pound a month for looking after the other midshipmen, and nicknamed "third mate." Was it known to these men, or suspected by them, that the ship was carrying specie, and that some of it in boxes might wash up? They would consider one box good booty, very well worth waiting for—it might contain a thousand sovereigns. I could not but think that in estranging themselves from me they had some hope or motive larger than might be explained by the valuables and money they had met with in the passengers' baggage.

Deeply musing, I entered the tent with my arms full of drink and food, and found Belle sitting in her canvas bed

laughing at the monkey ; in fact, a merry laugh broke from her as I entered.

"I am certain he has been an actor," she exclaimed, getting up, and then with a swift change to gravity she said : "Have you spoken to the men ?"

"Yes."

"Are they brutal ?"

"I am going with them after they have breakfasted to get one of the boats from the wreck ; we will water and provision her, and sail away at once."

"At once !" she cried. She was startled, and looking down at herself said : "Walter, cannot you find me a dress ?"

"I will see to that," I answered. "Let us now get some breakfast."

I had unconsciously brought away some champagne. I had thought it was Burgundy. It foamed pleasantly but tasted strangely in the tin out of which we drank it. Belle was thirsty and hungry, and so was I, and so was the monkey. We had cold water at hand for the monkey, and we made as hearty a meal as though our dangers were at an end, and all was well with us. She asked me where I should steer the boat to, and I answered that I should probably try for Pernambuco, but I was afraid that we should have to go away without a compass.

"In any case," said I, "the further we draw from these reefs the bigger will grow our chance of being rescued."

The men were eating and drinking near their boat. The picture, despite the splendor of the morning, was full of forlornness. It was sad to see the bodies lying upon the beach of the other island, and to know that they must remain unburied. This flushed me with a resolution to dig a hole with a stretcher to put little Boyton's remains in whilst the men breakfasted, but being without a cap and, observing that the head of the figure that had come ashore during the night was covered, I went down to it.

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It was Curling. He lay on his back, and his face stared up at the sky. He had probably been drowned sometime before he was washed ashore, and his struggle had been an easy one. He had met death with a smile, and the spirit I had noticed in him at the last still seemed to be visible in his countenance. I used to laugh at him for his religious convictions and efforts, yet could not but now think, as I looked down upon him, that he had done well to lead an honest life and to live both in the fear and in the love of God.

I took his cap from his head and put it on mine. I also removed his gold watch and silver chain with the intention of giving them up to his people should I be preserved. With a shudder of loathing I knocked away some land-crabs which were creeping about him, and went to the piece of canvas under which lay the other two bodies. I lifted a corner, but—O my God! what did I see? I shrieked like a girl. Never before nor since did I receive so violent a shock. The faces of both, boy and man, had been denuded entirely of flesh by the crabs. Two grinning skulls reposed side by side, and one of them was that of a little gentleman, one who had been a romantic dreamer, a poet in heart, with the fire of genius in his spirit. I could not leave him to lie like that, however it must go with the others, and sick of soul, I went to work with my stretcher. I could have plied no clumsier contrivance to dig a grave in the sand. I made a hole, but with infinite labor, for the stretcher threw up mere spoonfuls, and the silver sand was like water, and streamed down as fast as I flung it out.

At last I dug a grave big enough to receive this poor little boy, and then I fetched his body and laid him in his tomb. I covered him quickly, for the sight would have conquered a stronger spirit than mine, and when he was hidden, I pulled off my cap, and knelt down and said a short prayer.

The men had finished their breakfast, and they had un-

shipped the awning of the boat, and one was now shouting to me to come along, as they were all ready. I lifted my arm in motion of assent. Belle stood in the door of the tent.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To the wreck for a boat."

"I shall be left alone."

"I shall not be long gone," said I; but she was white and speechless as I passed on. It was no part of my scheme, however, to irritate the men by keeping them waiting. I was sure it would be all right with her, and walked briskly to the boat. They seemed impatient, and when I was come, the seven of them grasped the gunwales and drove the boat afloat. I waded after them, and climbed into her. Three of the men waded ashore, and this I had not foreseen. It made me very uneasy to think of Belle, for even an hour alone with three of those seven rascals. However, I composed my face, and consoled myself with reflecting that in everything that relates to the sea, a great deal must be left to chance.

I sat in the stern-sheets, and would not even look behind me, lest the men should think I was suspicious of their shipmates. The four sailors threw their oars over, and we proceeded very cautiously. They had not shipped a rudder, and they steered with their oars. I ventured to say:

"Do you intend to go to Pernambuco when you leave the reef?"

"We hain't made up our minds to anything," answered the fellow who pulled stroke. "Anyhow, I'm for giving the Portuguese a wide berth."

I asked no more questions, and we gained the side of the wreck. Three of the men and I sprang into the mizzen-chains, and clambered on to the poop. The fabric had settled down out of the violent slope of the plank, and motion was easy. Impatient as the fellows were, they

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could not but pause with a sort of gasp, when they looked around them at that picture of wreck, and saw their old fore-castle like a figure of charcoal ahead yonder, and all between, water. I peered over the starboard side, and saw a boat still afloat, with the blocks of its falls hooked into it, whence I guessed that the desperate angle of the deck had not been allowed for, so that the boat was lowered at that angle, and threw everybody out of her. This is mere surmise. It is certain the boat was lowered.

I took a swift view of the reef, and saw the three men knocking open some of the cargo, down by the water's edge. This lightened my spirits, and it was a satisfaction likewise to me to have them in view.

"Which boat 'ull be your choice?" said one of the sailors.

"Oh, the quarter boat," I answered, for the gig that hung at the stern had not this boat's seaworthy properties. She was long and slender, was fitted with brass rowlocks, and was built for rowing. The quarter boat, on the other hand, was fitted with air-boxes, which made a lifeboat of her. Her sail lay in her, stowed to its mast. In her, always in readiness—for the boats had been under my special charge—lay a large breaker of fresh water, a rudder and yoke with lines, four oars, and a baler and plug. I do not remember that more furniture than this went to her. I looked through the skylight-window, and saw that the water on the cabin floor, owing to the tilt of the deck, washed no further aft than the companion-steps, so that the cabins under the wheel could be entered. One of these cabins had been Bowser's, the other the chief mate's. I said to the men:

"Before you lower the boat, I want to overhaul the captain's cabin for nautical instruments and charts, to ascertain where we are."

"Ain't it under water?" said a man, walking to the skylight.

"No ;" said I, and the three of them followed me down the companion-steps.

It was like going to the bottom of the sea to descend into this interior. A surface of water, green, dark, gleaming, swept from the foot of the companion-ladder to about midway the height of the cuddy front. The scene was instantly made ghastly by the apparition of two dead bodies, in each other's arms, floating in the port corner, forward. The light *there* was so bad, owing to the dusk thrown into the atmosphere by the green brine, that I could not distinguish whether they were men or women. But it was no moment for sentiment. Indeed, the fabric of wreck might, at any instant, slip again, and add four more imprisoned bodies to these two. So, without pausing to muse upon this dreadful soaked picture of deadly, motionless water, mirrors mockingly sparkling over it, the piano with its associations of song and laughter, the table which had been regularly filled day after day by hungry passengers, with poor Bowser's jolly fat face glowing like the rising moon at the head of it, I passed swiftly into the captain's cabin, and was followed by the men.

This was a large room, well lighted by a stern window, and liberally furnished with all necessary sea appliances. My eye was immediately taken by a boat's compass upon the table. Everything had slid down the batten or coaming. I left the chronometers, but took Bowser's sextant, telescope, certain nautical works, and as quickly as possible, I overhauled a quantity of charts whilst the men searched the lockers—for *what*, I did not ask—and I never once looked at them. I thought I heard the chink of money, and it was not to be supposed that the captain would come to sea without a bag or two of sovereigns.

I took from a peg a warm coat that had belonged to Bowser ; it would make a good rug for Belle in the boat, and distributing the articles, for I could not carry all, I led the way up the companion-steps, and saw that the

compass and telescope were safely placed in the locker in the stern sheets of the quarter boat ; the coat, the chart, and one or two other matters were next placed in the boat, which was then lowered. The men behaved civilly ; something of their old sense of discipline seemed to have returned to them with this scene of the ill-fated ship's poop. It was not for me, however, to tell them that they were without a compass. They had meant to give me the slip. What had I to thank them for ? Why should I offer them any good advice ? Besides, for all I knew, some wild idea might possess them of sailing east instead of west by the sun, for sailors when undisciplined and let loose are fools ; they commit the unfathomable follies of the idiot ; they are as hopelessly romantic as small school-boys in their schemes, and they are as capricious as the gulls which wheel about the sea. Not one of these men knew what to do with a sextant, and a compass would be of little use to them if they were unable to set themselves a course. But this was their concern.

I sprang on to the rail, and descended hand over hand by the falls into the boat, out of which I threw the blocks. The men entered their boat by the mizzen channels, and when they had made fast the painter of my boat they towed me to the reef. The three men were still among the cargo down in the crawling surf, and I saw Belle watching us in the shadow of the door of her tent. As we went along I gazed about me very carefully for any signs of dead bodies, but saw none, nor did I see any sharks, from which I infer that those horrible, deadly creatures were too prudent to enter into a network of shoals, otherwise such a ghastly picnic of dead bodies as that wreck provided must certainly have made a very cemetery of those waters with the tombstones of wet, black fins.

We gained the reef. The men sprang out, and all seven drew their boat high and dry ; they let mine lie nuzzling the three or four wire-like lines of ripples which sang

sweetly to the ear in the freshness of their delicate melting of foam. The boat lay safe stern on, and as I was anxious to get away at once, I asked the men to help me to provision her. This they did, for they seemed as eager that I should be gone as I was to go. They filled the large breaker in the bows with fresh water from one of the casks. As there was a great abundance of provisions on the beach, there could be no excuse to stint me, and I took in more than I thought we should ever be likely to need, along with some wine and champagne in cases. I also stocked some brandy in this boat, and regretted very much that I had not brought away some tumblers and wine-glasses from the wreck.

But empty meat-tins must suffice, and when you are thirsty you will not be choice in your drinking-vessel.

My next business was to find a dress and a hat for Belle, and a few rugs. I said to one of the men :

“Has anything washed up bearing the lady’s letters?”

“I ain’t seen nothing,” said he. “P’rhaps it’s stranded on t’other reef.”

“The very few things I want,” said I, in a full hearing of the others, “will be of no use to you, and I hope you will allow me to help myself.”

“There’s a box full of female wearing clothes down yonder,” said one of the men, pointing to a large black trunk some hundred feet distant, and dragged well clear of the water.

“Is it locked?”

“It’s been busted.”

I went quickly to it, and by the initials saw that it had belonged to Miss Parker. The men had thoroughly overhauled it, and then stuffed the things in again, leaving a few odds and ends outside. I quite saw that their whole and sole intent was money and jewelry, and then there was grog and good living to last them a month, and perhaps two. They would not want even a third mate to

keep an eye upon them. They were poor, dirty, discontented, drunken sailors who, when they arrived at a port, would fall into the hands of a crimp, and be drugged, robbed, and shipped off afresh, all as easy as lighting a pipe. Why should not they find a little paradise in a bare reef under these melting heavens? The ship had carried rum as consigned freight, in addition to stores, and the stuff had come rolling in as though every cask had been alive, and knew that tipsy sailors were waiting for it. Hence, what with the wines and spirits, the hams and foods in cans, and the pork and beef which had also arrived, shipwreck had provided these fellows with a sumptuous plenty; they were not likely to hear of such delicacies ashore, and add to this the jewelry and valuables belonging to the passengers, and such gold as the ship might have been carrying.

In the poor lady's box it is needless to say I found what I wanted. I took a light dress, a couple of warm shawls, and a sailor's straw hat, a little broken by the rough handling of the men. Thus equipped, I walked to the tent, calling to the sea-men as I passed them—"You see, my lads, our wants are very small."

Belle was as rejoiced at my return as if I had been away a month. She colored hotly, her eyes sparkled, she stammered with delight; she had certainly been afraid of the three men we had left behind us. She put on Miss Parker's dress, and received the bruised straw hat as gratefully as if she had been in London and I had just arrived from Paris with something noble in millinery.

"Come along," said I, and she came out of the tent, and we walked to the boat. I hoisted her in, threw the shawls in after her, then begged a man to fetch me the piece of sailcloth from the tent to serve as an awning, and whilst he was gone I cut off some rope's ends lying about the beach, and these I also threw into the boat. The man returned with the piece of canvas.

"You'll want stanchions for it," said one of the sailors, and he dropped the lid of a wine-case over the boat's bows. "Got your knife on yer?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered. "Let me coil this painter down. Now, my lads, you can shove me off."

I stood in the bows of the boat grasping an oar, whilst the men thrust the boat off the beach.

"Good-by," said I, "I may hear of you again."

"Good-by, sir," they answered, and they stood in a group, grinning, and watching us; and that was all they said, and but two or three said it.

I had got the boat's head round, but did not choose to ship the rudder until we were clear of the reefs. I threw an oar over the stern and sculled slowly and very warily. The men receded, their figures diminished, the black fore-castle drew near, and we passed the *Glendower's* poop and stern, with the cabin windows flashing long lines of light into the dark blue placid water under them. It was strange to notice how small those reefs looked when we were only a little way off, and I marveled that the volume of the sea in such wrath as that as had wrecked our ship did not sweep them into wild beds of foam. Belle did not speak a word; she stared with horror at the poop of the wreck, and then I would see her gaze wandering into the eternity of waters which lay outside the reefs. It did not take long to go clear of those deadly shoals, and when I saw there were no more fangs of rock about us, and that our little boat was afloat on fathomless water, I shipped the rudder, then stepped the mast and hoisted the sail, and jumped aft with the sheet in my hand to Belle's side to examine the chart.

All of a sudden I was attracted by yells and cries from the beach, and standing up and looking behind me, I saw the men pointing to the water and making signs to me to return. I was startled; indeed, I may say I was very much alarmed.

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"What do they intend by recalling you?" Belle cried. "Oh, don't go back to them!"

And in truth my first impulse was for holding straight on, but reflecting that if they meant me to return they could sweep their boat by four powerful oars, and had therefore nothing to do but to fetch me, I lowered the sail, unshipped the rudder, and sculled the boat's head round, wondering what the fellows meant by pointing at the water and shouting. That reef only shows about eight feet of side at high water, and when you are some distance off, people standing on it seem to be walking on the surface of the sea, and so the men appeared.

I continued to scull, trying to make Belle believe that the men meant no mischief. Why should they have sent us off with a cargo of plenty to eat and drink? Not, surely, for so idle a motive as to halloo to us to return. Whilst I talked, I sculled the boat abreast of the stern of the wreck. A man who sculls has his back upon the bows. I paused here to look ahead, and immediately caught sight of what resembled a cocoanut coming along at us on top of a current.

"The monkey!" shouted Belle, whose fright found expression in a fit of hysteric laughter.

The monkey it was; a twist or two of the blade of the oar sent the boat alongside of him, where he lay shooting out like a frog, and leaning over the gunwale, I collared the beggar and lifted him, dripping, over the side.

I don't want to make too much of this incident, for even as it stands it may be doubted by those whose business lies in cities and not in deep waters. But I will say, nevertheless, that if ever the nature of man was confessed in the brute beast, it was visible in the behavior of that monkey after I had picked it up. I do not say it was grateful. That would not have been the nature of man, but he chattered with evident appreciation of his good luck, hugged himself, and made much of himself, and

with his hangman's face was a sight to visit one in dreams. Once again I turned the boat's head for the open, and sculled her with plenty of power of limb, and the men, who had continued to watch us, never sent a second cry of farewell after us, nor even so much as flourished an arm of "God's speed."

CHAPTER XX.

THE OPENB OAT.

WHEN we were clear of the reef we felt the power of the sea in a light fold of swell, but these noiseless movements, that breathed like the breast of a woman, did not crumble in foam about the rocks. Not a breath of air came in a single sigh or whisper out of that eternal field of azure, blue and dazzling as the splendors of the halls of the Omnipotent, where the noontide sun was showering his endless dart of glory into the sea.

It was about half an hour after noon. I did not need to take sights. I had a chart, and those rocks would very exactly tell me where I was, and enable me to take a departure. I did not again hoist the sail, but continued to scull until the fabrics of the wreck looked awash, and by that time the reefs had disappeared, so low-seated were we and they.

Never before had two young hearts entered upon an adventure more full of romantic peril than this. All who have tasted of the open boat at sea will know there is no bitterer marine cup. We were leagues and leagues distant from the coast of the Brazils, and indeed from the start I never looked for any better chance than that of being picked up. After all, I could not but remember that in proportion as the reefs receded, so should we enter or approach the high road of shipping bound coast-wise or from Europe to the several Brazilian ports. We had got heart to look with hope and even with eagerness to this boat voyage, from the knowledge that it released Belle

from the men. By this means alone could she have been rescued from a far more terrible fate than had befallen the other passengers. The sailors were gloomy, jealous, and quarrelsome, of a swinish greediness, and did not want me to stand there and watch them picking and stealing, and see them take up any treasure that might come ashore, and so we had got away with their very willing consent. But I never doubted that in a few days a change would come over the moods and humors of the rogues. They would be always under the influence of drink, and I was but one to seven, and when I looked at the fair, sweet delicate girl, I shuddered at the horrible thoughts which visited me, and thanked God for the freedom of the mighty breast of ocean over which I was slowly sculling the boat.

I was very anxious to set as wide an interval between us and the men as my arm could measure, and when I was dead beaten at last I threw in the sweating oar, and said :

“I’ll see where we are. This before doing anything else.”

I unrolled the chart, and instantly understood our situation, and tried to make Belle understand it, by explaining that those small dots were the Rocas, which we had just left, and that long swelling line, filled with names, the coast of Brazil, to which in God’s good time we were proceeding. But why, I marveled, with this chart in his possession, did Bowser shape so westerly a course ?

I now saw that there was an island called Fernando Noronha, distant west about 84 miles from the Rocas. The headland of Cape San Roque was about 130 miles away—no laborious sail, but, unfortunately, it was not a port. I determined to have nothing to do with Fernando Noronha. I knew it indeed by name, but could not have told you if it was peopled or not, and there was no good in making for what might prove a desert island, when I had a real port, with houses, hotels, and a consul, within reach of three or four days of a breeze of wind.

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It was blistering hot, and the paint-work of the boat began to bubble and smell. It was like touching fire to rest the hand for an instant upon a thwart or the gunwale. I brought out the compass and placed it on the stern sheets, and saw that the boat's head was due south.

"She's bound to Australia, Belle," said I. "She's got the scent of Sydney Bay from the old mother she's lost."

"I don't know even now where we are," said Belle, who looked very cool, fresh, and happy. "I never could understand geography. But wouldn't it be a wonderful thing for us two in this boat, with this old man to bear us company," said she, pointing to the monkey, "to make the voyage to Sydney from these remote seas?"

"It would indeed," I exclaimed. "But this heat is shocking. What, I wonder, is the temperature? In heat of this sort I cease to have any opinions or ideas—I am idiotic."

"Keep cool," said Belle, resting her dark, soft eyes steadfastly upon me.

"We'll make a shadow, anyhow. Shade and wind. Shade and wind," I repeated, as I pulled out my wonderful knife; then catching up the top of the case I split it into stanchions which I fitted in the thole-holes. I unlaid the rope's ends, and with the yarns bound pieces of the wood to my stanchions to make them strong enough to support the sail. This done, I fitted yarns to the corners of the canvas and spread it, and I pulled off the poor second mate's heavy cap, and flung it at the monkey, and wiped the sweat that was running in white water from my face, and uttered many pious ejaculations of thanks for the refreshing coolness of the shade we now sat in.

The swell of the sea ran in a long-drawn gentle heave, and the fragments of wreck came and went—came and went with sickening iteration past the wide blue curves of Brine. It was the black wreck showing like charcoal; and it was the after part which flashed farewells to us from

its windows ; and they came and went as the pendulum swings, and there was nothing else to look at. No, by the unfathomable heaven, not a feather of canvas anywhere, no soft, soiling tinge of smoke. This was a silent sea, and the silence of it was in our ears and in our souls.

"How far can one see from a boat of this size ?" asked Belle.

"A very little way. Two or three miles."

"A ship will have to come close to catch sight of us, then ?"

"Oh, yes. Quite close. I am going to scull again in a minute. I want to put the boat out of sight of that wreck there. Belle, did you ever think it would have come to this with us ?"

She looked at me fondly, shaking her head.

"When we played at horses ! What are we playing at now ? You know," said I, "that people read about such things as this, but there's not one girl in ten millions, and that's a good average, who has undergone your experience."

"They are drowned like poor Miss Parker," answered Belle, "and where should I have been but for you ? How was my heart supported in that frightful swim by knowing you were close behind me and upholding me."

"Young ladies are not saved at sea very often," said I, "because they do not fall in love with the mates of the ship, and there is therefore no special Providence for them. I wish a little breeze would come on to blow," and I looked around the horizon for a cloud, for any place for a small wind to come out of. But the dazzle swept in untarnished blue to the lens-like line of the horizon, and I saw no hope of wind in the sky ; all had been consumed in the destruction of the *Glendower*.

Every man's watch stops when he falls into the sea, and it marks the hour of his death, or it tells the time of his misfortune. My watch had stopped, and I was sorry I

had not brought away one of the *Glendower's* chronometers and make a clock of it.

My mind had been a little overstrained, and then again there was the secret deep anxiety begotten of the voyage we were bound on ; certain it is that at this time I was visited by a morbid terror of the men we had left behind. I looked across that pulsing bed of ocean, and a fancy came into me that they would talk over the matter of our going, and agree that they had been fools to part with the girl. I feared they would follow us, and take the girl out of the boat, and when it was time to quit the reef, they would cut her throat or abandon her to the land-crabs.

This horrible idea wrought me into a sudden frenzy. I sprang up and sculled the boat a mile and a half southwest without a pause. Belle begged me to rest, but I stood up and swayed at the oar with the desperation of my fear until I was spent and breathless, and pulled in the oar and fell in the sternsheets. But the remains of the wreck were now out of sight. Once only I thought I caught the film-like vision of a piece of the fabric as we rose to the height of a swell. I believe Belle saw my mind in my face, for her heart looked tremulously in her eyes, and she asked no questions.

After I had rested I guessed it was about time to get something to eat. We were put to our shifts for crockery and the like, but managed thus : I knocked off the head of a champagne bottle and frothed up a bumper in a tin, and Belle drank and sparkled like a white rose after a shower. I emptied the bottle and chucked it away, then opened a tin of chicken and tongue. The biscuits were large and white, and made good trenchers or plates, and sometimes Belle used my knife, and sometimes I cut my meat with it, and so we dined on that first day of the boat, and the monkey ate biscuit.

It will not be supposed that passenger ships in my time

went to sea provisioned in the immense abundance of the mail-steamers and carrying liners of these days. But a great deal was put into the lazarette that was very good eating. The list of the things would run to the length of a grocer's catalogue. The best food that could be had was chosen for cuddy use. Charges according to accommodation ran high, though competition was scarcely less active than it is now, and the ship-owner who sought to keep his line of vessels popular with passengers, fed them well, and laid in plenty of wine and spirits, but they paid for what they asked for, unless it was Marsala, which they got free. Those fellows ashore had found stuff enough to eat and drink to keep them alive for months, and for weeks cargo would continue to wash up, every dawn would disclose a fresh revelation ; it would be ghastly, in the shape of a dead body, it would be welcome in the form of wine, or spirits, or food ; it would prove more gorgeous to the tastes and talent of the men than the upspringing of the glorious sun if it were a chest of sovereigns. Seven men on a desert reef and an open chest of sovereigns burning in the light ! Seven men of Ratcliffe Highway, filled with the passions of the stews and the argument of the knife that the sailor straps to his hip. I guessed that if money was rolled ashore, it would be by the hand of murder ; indeed, by the dim light of the late moon, whilst the men lay groaning down the drugged breath of sleep, the imagination saw the red demon turning the chest of gold out of the sea before him, and leaving it easily within the reach of those whose souls would be sentenced to the fires of hell for that fatal and perfidious gift. Thus did I moralize whilst I cut some chicken and ham for Belle

A breathless calm still swung along in folds ; the reef had habituated us to the closeness of the sea, and its mighty presence was not shocking. But shocking it will be, even to stout hearts, when they *first* get away from a tall ship in a small boat, and float alone. The awning

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made a pleasant shade ; without it our lot would have been unbearable. It was not only the sun raining down in fire from on high, it was the heat sparkling up off the sea in arrowy light, which blinded the eye like the flash of new tin ; these things combined, and without a shelter, they had roasted us between them.

"We have both lost all we have," said Belle, "if even we safely arrive at a port, how shall we manage for money and clothes ?"

"I hope not to arrive," I answered, "because I want to be picked up. Should we arrive, there is a consul whose duty it is to adjust the little difficulties you name."

"We ought to arrive soon if wind would blow," said Belle, "and when we get home, Walter, I suppose we shall be the first to report the loss of the *Glendower* ?"

"I have no doubt we shall be," said I.

"My uncle will be amazed," she continued ; "he is thinking of me as sailing safely and happily along to Sydney. Well, he will have to buy me more frocks, and take a passage for me in another ship. What will you do ?"

The monkey seemed to listen attentively.

"I don't know," I answered a little heedlessly.

"Then I'll answer for you," she exclaimed. "You will sail in the same ship I sail in as a passenger, and so we will go to Sydney together."

"I am afraid my father wouldn't fork out," said I ; "and then there will be the expense of a new kit, and he'd grumble at my dropping my profession."

"We will make him see things from our point of view," said Belle, "after our safe arrival in London. Indeed," she continued with a gravity I found very sweet, "I believe we could not do better than get married in London, so that on our arrival in Sydney I should be able to introduce you as my husband, and my aunt would then be a relation, in honor bound to find you some good position on shore."

This seemed strange, idle talk in the mouths of two people in a small open boat on a wide sea. But the human nature in men and women will keep on breaking through in all moods and conditions; the gloom overhead thins, and rifts of blue appear, and you hail the sign of the shining of the sun, albeit next moment the shadow has settled more deeply over you. The heart shines as the sun shines, its ray will pierce dejection and kindle the lamp of hope, and the mental cloud, the expectation, the dread, the dark dreary prospect lifts and settles like a curtain of vapor on a mountain side to the flash of the magic light which all men carry in their bosoms.

At three o'clock it was still a dead calm, and being seized with another fit of fear of the men, I sculled the boat southwest for about half an hour, then sat down and smoked a pipe. This privilege was mine. I had swam ashore with my pipe in one pocket and a thick cake of tobacco in the other, and the tobacco was now dry, and I could not have told you that it had been soaked in brine. The monkey being old was quiet. His swim had wearied him, and sometimes he slept. I think I see now the dirty white envelopes of his eyes, making yet more ugly and repellent the most hangdog-looking monkey I ever saw. I could not but muse upon him as I sat sucking my pipe.

"A sort of luck, do you know, Belle, may attend that beggar," said I, "and perhaps it is as well that he is with us. He was in luck to be the only beast that was saved from the *Anne Bonny*. He was in luck to have got ashore from the *Glendower*. He is in luck to be here. Those men would have left him behind, and the land-crabs would have picked his bones clean. How wise he looks, although he seems to dream."

"He may be our good angel," said Belle.

"Lord bless me!" cried I, and my imaginative mind instantly submitted a paradise of monkeys, with some vast enthroned beast of the monkey type not yet discovered by

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man, adored day and night by apes and gorillas, and the rest of them, to the noise of hurdy-gurdys.

"What is that out there?" said Belle. She had rings on her fingers, and her white hand flashed as she pointed.

"The shadow of wind," I exclaimed after a look. It was coming along out of the east in a floating violet dye, snatching and helping its way forward with antennæ as of the gigantic marine insect. It melted out the brassy clarity of the blue water, and put a life of rejoicing ripples in it. But though it was not far off when we first saw it, it came with provoking slowness. Then the whole of the horizon was dark and living with an air of wind, and now it was breathing upon us—a hot, small wind, and its shadow was sheeting away on the water on the other side of the boat.

I unshipped the awning, hoisted the sail, and shaped a course for Pernambuco. It was sweet and refreshing to the senses to hear the ripple breaking from the bow and going away in laughter and eddies, and light astern. A few fleeces were showing in the wind, and they enriched the sky, but they were without volume to moderate the potency of the sun's sting. The sail was a lug, and rather large for one man; indeed, our boat was a large one; as good and seaworthy a quarter boat as ever hung at a ship's davits. She was bruising through it pleasantly to the drag of her canvas, and Belle sat in the shade made by the sail, and I in the eye of the sun steering for Pernambuco.

"If it'll keep at this," said I, "it will be a yachting trip, Belle. I used to be sailing a boat when I was a little boy in a Holland blouse at Bouville. What has become of that little boy? He has continued to sail, and so he has sailed away, and he is out of hail of all that his blouse meant."

"You are a fine moralist," said Belle mockingly.

"And what has become of the child I raced round the gardens with?" said I, keeping my gaze fixed upon her

sweet eyes, violet and dark in the shadow of the sail. "The phantom," I continued, meaning the vision I had seen, "is with me. The real thing—your little self—is as dead and gone as last year's daisy."

"No, I disagree. People do not die in that fashion and go on living," exclaimed Belle. "I can trace myself down to the period when I raced with you, and I'm not dead as a daisy. Are you not rather fanciful and romantic? Do not you love to color the bubble and to paint the rose? Walter, the charm of life lies in its realities, for the sympathy of existence is lodged in reality. Your dreamer is always wide of the mark, and, like a blind man, goes tapping along awkwardly, seeing nothing himself, and when he is led by his dog Prejudice, he is very often in the way."

"How clever you are, and what a noble scene this is to hold an argument in," said I. "We must dream, unless we would lead the life of a figure-head. We must cherish our hopes and gild our imaginations, or life would be as flat as stale ale. Who are the dreamers, Belle? Are they the men who stand upon the Stock Exchange? Are they the men who have given us in works of immortal poetry such revelations of the truth of life and death as might have been uttered by God Himself."

I was emotional, and spoke with feeling. Belle listened with a quiet smile, but just as I closed my lips there arose within reach of a boat-hook alongside a—what? A thunder storm? By heaven! a huge, filthy, gray whale, covered with hair and weed and parasites, and the air stunk of him. He threw the shadow of a cliff upon us, and the sail flapped under his lee. I instantly put the helm up, and the beast spouted and sent a tremendous gaping fountain through the wind, not a drop of which I am thankful to say touched us. Belle stared as if it was the devil. There was no more argument. Another whale rose a hundred yards off to windward of the first chap, and shook his plume of silver to the sun. Then a third and a fourth, and in a little

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while I found we were on the edge of a whole school. The creatures seemed to be rolling and spouting away into the southwest. No more rose close to terrify us, but it had been a narrow shave. Had that mountain of blubber floated closer by the length of a boat-hook only under our keel, and lifted, he would have capsized us, then have sunk and left us floundering. I shuddered, and Belle was pale as the cloud.

I gazed with no small interest at that wonderful breast of whales. We were safe, and I could look and admire. You thought of the magic fountain islands of the Arabian story when you saw those swollen gray or livid shapes solemnly arching their vast bulk upon the languid heave of the sea, and discharging every one as he emerged, a plume of water to the sky.

They continued in sight for about half an hour, but by this time the wind was heading me off my course. It was knocking the boat's head to the northwest, so I put her about, a troublesome job with a big lug-sail and one man. Belle held the tiller whilst I dipped the sail, and hoisted it afresh, and then we went away about west-southwest, which was not as the crow would fly for Pernambuco, but my real and only hope lay in being picked up. I got Belle to steer whilst I swept the horizon with the captain's glass standing on a thwart with my back to the mast, but it was no good. Had anything been in sight I should have seen it with the naked eye, and the telescope would merely have made a clear submission of it.

"Are no ships ever to be found in these seas?" asked Belle who began to look as if she was tired of sitting. But there was no room to stretch her legs; it would have endangered her neck and imperiled the safety of the boat had she attempted to jump the thwarts for exercise, and outside that, for *her*, beyond occasionally standing up or shifting her seat to leeward, no room for putting her limbs in motion was provided by that boat.

"Oh, yes," said I; "ships are in every sea, and they mostly fly the colors of our country. But reflect how big a thing a sea is, and how little a thing a boat is. Half-a-dozen of vessels might easily be around us, hull down below the horizon, and we should sail on and exclaim, It is wonderful we see nothing."

"I fear the night," said Belle. "Supposing we should be run down."

"Why shouldn't that monkey keep a look out?" said I, and here that old executioner stared at me as though he understood English. "We are not likely to be run down, Belle, nor has the night arrived. I fear this wind will fail us at sundown."

It happened as I foresaw. We sprang through it aslant for a couple of hours to the brimming gush of the breeze, that, when it had first come on to blow, had awakened the sea into large violet eyes of light, till the whole ocean was colored, but when it was about half-past six or seven, for I had no time upon me and was obliged to guess by the sun, the breeze died out; a burning sea with a dreamy respiration running through it reflected the magnificence of the sunset. The sun looked four or five times vaster than its usual bulk. It seemed to slide in incandescent ore behind the sea line. It was a miracle of insipid splendor; there was not a cloud for the light to paint, and the ether turned a dull pale gold. We watched the blood-red shining path he made upon the sea slipping away with the descent of the orb until the glory of the day flashed out like a sudden upheaval in a great fire, then died leaving a little redness. But the spirit of night out of the east came sweeping round to clasp her jeweled hands upon the pyre of the sun, and now darkness was upon the sea.

We both felt the awe and the mystery as never could they be felt on board a ship. The mighty ocean was close to us. We could drop our hands over the side and touch it. And as though the sunset behind the sea was reflected

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from below, strange shapes, patches, queer configurations of the sea-fire glowed coldly, widening in each heave of swell and rising like the lack-luster eyes of the drowned to our gunwale as we swayed.

But by this time I had lowered the lug and shipped the awning as a shelter for Belle to lie under. How was she to lie, and where? I made a mattress of the captain's coat, bringing it under the after thwart well into the stern sheets. I rolled up a shawl for a pillow. "And when you are ready to lie down," said I, "I will cover you up with this other shawl."

"Do you intend to remain awake all night?" she asked.

"A lookout must be kept," said I.

"Could you trust me to keep a lookout, Walter?"

"Yes."

"I think," said she, "that you ought to let me have a hand in the saving of my own life. You want to get all the glory of our rescue. Now I have just as good eyes as you, and can be as wakeful as a nursing sister when needful."

So we decided to divide ourselves into two watches. I would keep a lookout till I guessed it was about two o'clock, and then she would call me, after I had taken about two hours' rest. That would do, always providing there was no weather coming along. But of weather I saw no hint. The night was as placid as the face of a dead child. It was a full sky of stars and no token in their trembling beauty of a change.

Belle, however, was not disposed to lie down merely because the dusk of the night had drawn around. We got some supper and she sat by my side, and we talked in low voices, insensibly awed by the mighty spirit-hush that rested like a visionary uplifted arm of menace upon the sea. I cannot but think that my romance reached its highest point this night. I was alone with my sweetheart upon the ocean, in the darkness of the night, and if it had not been for the stars the lonesomeness of that black and

breathing breast of oil was such that God Himself, as the poet says, would have scarcely seemed there to be. Did I make love to my sweetheart? Did she make love to me? You may take my word for it, there is very little sentiment at sea, and none at all in an open boat when people are thinking of their lives, and looking over the side and imagining themselves drowned. The specter of memory too was with us. That demon must needs form one of the crew. Could he forbear to point to the horrors of the night of shipwreck, to the sudden miserable obliteration of a crowd of people, whose hearts, one instant before the ship struck, were beating with the tranquillity of assured safety.

You cannot make love when memories of death and distress are vivid; when the scene you occupy is a curved plank or two; when shadowy shapes, gigantic and scarce determinable, march through the murkiness treading the brows of the rolling swells, and when large whispers float through the gloom from, God knows where.

We talked of those with whom we had been associated on board ship. I went away back into the years, and told her of my fantastic dreams when a boy. How I would lie awake in my bed in the moonlight at Dodson's, and dream with my eyes open. But did the most ardent movement of my imagination ever carry me to such a scene as this?

"Boys don't think of girls," said Belle, "when they dream as you did."

"You slipped very early into my dream, Belle."

"You let me slip out again very quickly. I believe I have thought of you all my life ever since we met, and you not once of me until we met to join the ship."

"There is something in you which is beyond nature," said I. "You can be a vision—Good God! what's that?"

It was the monkey who had caught hold of my leg in a determined effort to whip up on to my knee.

"I wish there was some place I could batten this thing down in," said I. "However, I believe he understands English, and I will give him some good advice."

I picked up the old executioner, and got into the bows with him and then sat him down, and I said, "You infernal hangman, you see that cold sea over the side. You shall be dropped into it if you quit your proper quarters, the fo'scle. So, you scoundrel," and I held my clenched fist close to his nose, gesticulating aft, and then pointing down to let him know where he was to stop, "if you stir from this place overboard you go."

He chattered, he remonstrated. I gave him a thwack over the side of the head and indulged in further pantomime. He was in a violent rage, and spat and danced, but another cuff over the head drove the ugly scoundrel well into the bows, and there I left him, confident that we understood each other.

It might have been nine o'clock that night when Belle hinted by a little yawn that she was sleepy. She easily stretched herself upon poor old Bowser's coat, and I threw a shawl over her, and pressed my lips to her cheek. There was nothing to hope for in the way of sail whilst this weather lasted, nor in those years was there much to expect in the shape of steam. I was cheered by the companionship of Belle, but I own that the loneliness of the ocean in the profound gloom of that long night, the countless cold eyes of the heavens which looked down upon me, the weary respiration running through the heart of the deep, weighed very heavily upon my spirits, so that there were times when I could scarce keep my heart up for lack of hope.

Belle slept ; she slept as sweetly and calmly as though she had been an angel who had alighted upon our little boat from the skies, and lain down and slumbered, that we might have faith and be of good cheer. Whether the monkey understood me or not, I can't say ; throughout the night he kept to his end of the ship.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAROONED.

It was after two by the stars as I might guess when Belle awoke. She rose, and begged me to let her take my place. There was no wind, and the dawn was not far distant, and bidding the dear girl call me instantly should a change in the weather happen, I lay down upon Bowser's coat, very well satisfied that her lookout would not be less strict than mine.

I fell asleep quickly, and dreamt strangely and wildly, and was rescued from the grasp of a nightmare by Belle's soft hand laid lightly on my cheek.

"What is that?" she asked.

I instantly sprang to my feet, and strained my sleepy gaze full into the livid terraces of the breaking day. A little air was breathing.

"Look!" cried Belle again with excitement pointing into the ashen dawn. What is that, Walter?"

And now I saw something that was to continue to puzzle me whilst I stared at it with my bare vision in the few minutes of that sad light. I thought at first it was the hull of a ship, then that we had in some fashion drifted back again towards the Rocas, of which lively family yonder was a member. I then thought it must be land, for it had the solid look of it, but it was low seated, whatever it might be, and it could not be an island known to the navigator, for none hereabouts was down on the charts, and there was no land nearer than Fernando Noronha.

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The sky began to brighten ; I threw a hasty look round, and saw that the sea was everywhere shivering to the passage of the delicate warm breeze. Nothing was in sight but that object in the east.

The monkey sat in the bows viewing it.

"I am certain it is an island," exclaimed Belle ; "and I believe I can see trees upon it."

I took the glass out of the locker and leveled it. I was amazed ; there leapt into the lenses a little sallow island, with a number of trees upon it, most of them ruined as though by a hurricane, and in the midst of the trees was something I could not obtain a clear sight of : it was solid, and made a thickness there, and I thought it was a house. I pulled out the chart to make sure, for the flash of the sun was now upon the sea. But nothing was set down as indicating land, or a rock or a shoal. I again examined the spot most carefully through the telescope. It was between three and four miles off, and lay on top of the horizon. The glass gave me as good a sight of it as if I had been within a quarter of a mile. I saw that some of the trees were mercilessly twisted, and stood aslant, like old brooms stuck in a garden bed. The vegetation, likewise, so far as I could collect, suggested the ravage of the hurricane.

But what was that object which thickened the inner group of trees ? I dodged with the glass but to no purpose.

"We will go and have a look at that island," said I. "But let us get some breakfast first."

This we did, and we fed the monkey, but all the time we ate and drank our eyes were glued to that strange mysterious little piece of land.

"I have read in old travelers," said I, "of such things as enchanted islands. I wonder if that is one of them. What peculiarity has the enchanted island ? It comes and goes at will. It rises in the moonlight alongside sleeping

ships, and the amazed sailor hears the noise of invisible men and women singing amongst the trees."

"But what a little bit of an island it is," said Bell.

I munched and mused, and then a sudden idea possessed me, and I uttered a shout. It was a shout of amazement. I nearly choked myself in my eagerness to again level the glass; and after carefully observing the island, I did most clearly perceive by an occasional slow motion that the whole mass was afloat.

A floating island! Did you ever hear of such a thing? Do you suppose that I am inventing this merely as an incident in a romance of adventure by sea? Where is the old sailor who has not in his time, in one voyage or another, sighted the floating island, the fragment of earth remorselessly wrenched by the irresistible power of the cyclone or the tornado from the mother continent, and sent to add another whilst it lasts to the countless wonders of the deep?

"It is a floating island," said I putting down the glass.

"Impossible, Walter."

"My dear, there it is. It is land, and it is swimming on the surface of the water. I have heard of such things."

"Are you going to visit it?"

"Certainly."

She seemed a little timid. She was alarmed by the unnaturalness of floating land. She could not conceive that the island was water-borne, not upon its own earth, but upon a vast intermingling and intricacy of roots and downward striking fangs of a vegetation nameless by me, who report *only* what I saw.

I unshipped the awning, hoisted the sail, and headed dead for the little island. We rippled quietly onwards; again it was a cloudless day, and I knew that the eye of the sun would soon roast this pleasant and refreshing draught out of the atmosphere. From what part of the world had yonder island come? From the Brazilian coast no doubt. As we drew near I judged it to be of the size of the reef

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we had left, but of a different shape. What had seemed shallow at a distance changed into a livid and into a scorched look to the gradual approach of the boat. *There*, I thought was some swimming, lingering, memorial of fire, earthquake and tornado ; it signalized in fragmentary aspect some terrific spasm of nature that may have devastated the face of half a province.

“What can that be in the middle of it?” said Belle.

“And what can be that beautiful silver light which girdles it?” said I ; “and rises and falls, and pulsates as though it were mercury under-run by a swell. What are we going to discover?”

We were now drawing close, and lowering the sail I threw an oar over and sculled. How am I to describe this floating island in words? It would need the colors, and some of them ghastly, of the great painters to reveal it to you, charged with its incommunicable spirit of loneliness, ghostlike, almost appalling, and as a miracle, which to my sight it was. I saw a considerable tract of land *afloat* ! The edges of it came close down to the sea ; there was a great quantity of fallen timber half out and half in, and the mystery of the sight lay in its motion, for that it had, now we were close enough to perceive it : the motion I mean of a very faint lift and fall, passing through it like some large secret swell from west to east. It was like the memory of the earthquake and a yearning in the soil to attach itself to its mother coast again.

The trees were a bewilderment to the eye ; some had been entirely stripped, and stood up like telegraph poles ; some looked like cocoanut trees, and bowed their unearthly tufts. All the leaning trees inclined the same way, but I should have thought from the cork-screwed appearance of many of them that the tempest had fallen on the land like a bolt straight from a thunder-cloud, and that the fury of the wind had been afterwards.

And now as we drew quite close I saw in the middle of

the island among the trees the object that had greatly puzzled me from the beginning. What do you think it was? Probably you will have needed to live in the West Indies to believe me.

I do but speak the truth when I say that it was a little schooner of about eighty tons, blown high and dry clean out of water, lying with a slight list to port, her lower masts and maintop-mast standing. She was quite newly sheathed as though fresh from the builder, and her metal burnt like gold amongst the trees.

"Are you going to land?" asked Belle.

"Certainly," I answered. "It will refresh us to stretch our legs. I want to take a close look at that beautiful little schooner."

"There may be snakes," exclaimed Belle.

"I should say not. I don't see why. The land looks scorched."

The monkey sat in the bows viewing the island without excitement. This was strange. I had thought that the sight of the trees would have delighted the old beggar, and kept him hopping about in madness until he could spring ashore. He contemplated the little island thoughtfully, and did not seem to think much of it. Even half an hour of dry earth would be a break. It is impossible to express how weary mind and body become in the open boat when you can but stand, and when you are nearly always sitting, and when you see nothing but the horizon which will presently bind itself about your brow, like a material ligature, cutting into the brain and driving you frantic.

I saw no signs of a man or anything alive as I sculled very slowly with one hand, whilst I looked towards the island. The wonderful part to me was that floating girdle of liquid silver; it could not be sand, for sand would dissolve and go away with the water; it could not be coral beach, for coral made no portion of this creation. I directed

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the boat's head for an opening between two small fallen trees and as we steered through the silver mass I saw that it was *fish*—fist exquisitely minute, in millions and billions, a mighty and glorious roll of sparkling atoms. I was thunderstruck and enchanted, and shouted with admiration. They floated so close on the surface that they looked like a shore, and you might easily have mistaken them, and stepped on this strange island strand. It sank under our keel, but in a beautiful undulation, as though granting admission, and the rest of this marvelous picture continued as before to float close under the sea in a thick body of light, which pulsated as the heavens on a starry night tremble and shake.

I drove the boat stem on right into the land, jumped out, and helped Belle to jump out. I then put my weight upon the boat and dragged it by about a foot upon the shore to steady it, and taking the painter, I secured it to one of the fallen trees which lay very handy for that purpose, for there was nothing better to attach her to within the scope of her line.

Belle grasped my arm, and we both gazed about us, and the monkey gazed, but from the boat. He would not come out, and I did not trouble myself to invite him. It was like landing on an enchanted island. The leaning and storm-blasted trees, the scorched and ragged vegetation, the movement of the long-drawn swell in the island's length, the beautiful little schooner, marvelously and securely embalmed in the heart of the withered forest, combined to create an affecting and subduing mystery for this little principality. We paused, hand in hand, expecting to hear voices calling. Down by the wash of the sea the soil was soft, but in a few paces it grew as hard as baked clay. The undergrowth had been chiefly of the stuff they call guinea-grass. There were many dwarf trees and giant bushes, all of a tropic character, but withered and wrecked by the mighty passion of flame and gale.

"I do not like to move," said Bell. "I keep on thinking I see snakes."

"You're mistaking the long black roots of trees. It is impossible that anything can be alive on this island."

Indeed, nothing could be more evident, unless it should turn out that a man or two, or perhaps more, were locked up in the little schooner. I had her very plain in sight. She was an extremely pretty model, such as, I believe, they used to build in the Bermudas. Her bright metal made her very handsome. The gale had picked her up as if she had been a boy's toy, and carried her clean inshore with the loss of her jib-boom and her foretop-mast only, that I could see. On this side her bottom showed no injury, but on the other she might prove bilged.

"If I could get that little vessel afloat," said I, "and pick up a couple of men, hang me, Belle, if I wouldn't sail you right away to England."

All this time we stood looking. If the truth must be told, I desired before advancing to make quite sure that nothing *was* living—man, beast, or reptile, and now we made our way slowly towards the schooner. It was necessary to walk with great caution, and sometimes we had the length of a fallen tree to wind about. The soil seemed filled with tangled roots, and the island resembled a huge basket, whose fabric was visible in the soil, and through the storm-trampled grass.

"The one thing I cannot realize is this," said I. "We are afloat; all the rest is intelligible to any man who understands the power of the hurricane. But to stand upon solid land with trees and bushes, swimming in the middle of the sea—one should go to Gulliver to match it."

"It might sink on a sudden," said Belle; "and what should we do."

"It'll last another half hour," said I, and this brought us to the schooner.

I examined the little vessel's run, bilge, and bows care-

fully, but could not see that she had been injured in any way in the hull. She evidently sat long and low upon the water, and sailed fast. Her rudder was in its place. Her marvelous preservation made me think of the butterflies one sometimes sees in the central calm of the raging cyclone. No name was on her stern. She looked to have been freshly painted. You will say the trees and growth of this island were fire-blasted. Why not the schooner? I answer—it is but an opinion—the weight of the fire and the hurricane fell straight out of the sky before it swept into the furious wind which had cast this little ship up high and dry, and disengaged the piece of land from the country it belonged to.

It was very easy to board this schooner, and as my curiosity was great, and as, moreover, I felt that I should not be doing my duty as a sailor in quitting this miraculous island without bringing away a full and accurate report of the little ship upon it, I grasped a rope that lay over the side, and finding it secured, went up hand over hand. Before I could think of looking, I must have Belle with me, for I did not like the idea of being in the cabin whilst she was standing waiting for me on the grass outside, so I made a bowline on a bight, which she put under her arms, and then I threw a rope's end over for her to help herself up with. She climbed and I hauled; she was light and I was strong. She came up "handsomely," breathless, glowing, her expression shaped for alarms, and then we looked about us.

Now that we were on the deck of the schooner, I thought that she would not be less on the whole than one hundred tons. She had plenty of beam; her plank was white as a yacht's; her masts were bright, and the sun veined them with golden lines. The wreck of the foretop-mast with its yards and canvas lay over the bow; she had sustained no other injury aloft. It was clear that she had been at anchor when the hurricane picked her up; indeed, I had

remarked some links of cable hanging in one of her hawse-pipes when I walked round her, but her furled canvas sufficed to convince me that she had been riding.

All her deck appointments were wonderfully good, and showed taste, and even extravagance. Her binnacle stand was a fanciful piece of brass and wood-work ; carvings of the heads of snakes formed mouldings of the companion-way. I looked into her little galley and found it very well equipped. Everything needful for dressing the food for a small crew was there. I saw three plates on the dresser, which put an idea into my head. Perceiving the cook's fork leaning by the door, I picked it up and plunged it into the coppers, and brought out a piece of meat almost raw.

"What have you got there?" cried Belle, looking with horror at the huge, pale cube I flourished.

"This assures me," said I, "that the vessel was manned when she was blown ashore. Here, at all events, is proof positive that the cook was aboard. When the gale was over the people got away in a boat, and the captain had the pleasure of watching his schooner drifting out to sea in the middle of an island."

"The vessel must have been carried just as she lies through the air," said Belle.

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"By those plates," she answered.

I put the piece of meat upon the top plate, and placed the fork on the dresser, and walked to the little fore-castle hatch. This was formed by a companion-way and cover. It was open, and I put my head in and shouted. I then told Belle to stop where she was, easily dropped below, and found myself in a small but comfortable fore-castle containing four bunks and a little table. There was some bedding in the bunks. I saw two seamen's chests, which I examined, and found the contents of the usual pattern. I came away, and noticed as I passed the little galley that

the only boat the vessel had apparently carried was gone. I also observed that she mounted a long nine-pounder in her bows, and a smaller gun in brass was pivoted on her quarter-deck.

"This vessel's a filibuster," said I. "What's her cargo, I wonder?"

I opened her main-hatch, and sank out of Belle's sight on top of a quantity of commodities. It was dark down here, and it took me some time to get the use of my eyes. I then saw a range of fresh water-casks full, which proved she had been ready to go to sea. I noticed a number of white cases and boxes of different sizes, and right forward I counted eight small barrels which I easily knew to contain gunpowder! I quite understood, as an old hand whom the sun had roasted whilst he had tallied the like of such stuff out and in over the side, that the cases contained weapons, muskets, swords, pistols, cartridges, and so on.

"It was a good thing for the men on board this little hooker," said I, coming out of the hold and talking to Belle whilst I put on the hatch cover, "that they were not blown by the lightning stroke into onion peels as high as the stars. She's full of gunpowder and other blow-me-up matter."

"Let's get away," said Belle. "There's something shocking in the look of this island."

She was right; it had a livid look, and the trees stood like bowed skeletons, withered and sapless. But there was plenty of them, and they made a sort of shade with wide gashes of bare sky betwixt their riven and ruined heads. You might know by signs you saw that before the hurricane of fire fell, this little piece of land had formed part of a princely territory of rich, rare, and curious growth. I saw blasted toad-stools, which might have been as big as targets and as crimson as the flag; specters of spires and spikes, which, in their bloom, had colored the

place with a glory of many flowers. All had been seared, and being dead, the life of the sea you felt in it made it wonderful.

"Are you going down-stairs?" asked Belle.

"Yes," I answered. "I mean to see the whole show. It is strange and fine."

"Suppose there should be a dead man down-stairs?"

"Remain here, Belle."

"No, I'll not be left alone."

And she followed me through the little companion-way. There was no dead man, nor anything visible of a terrifying sort; on the contrary, everything was clean, fresh, and cozy. Two little sleeping berths forward, and two aft: a table, a locker covered with horse-hair, a handsome brass lamp, and some hanging shelves full of books.

I looked about me for the lazarette hatch, and I saw the ring of it lying just abaft the table. I pulled it up, and looked down: but it was too black, I could see nothing, nor durst I strike a match, a handful of which was in my pocket, for I could not imagine what was stowed down here. All that I could see was a faint glimmer of what was undoubtedly cases of provisions, then a couple of casks coming close up forward under the hatch.

"This schooner," said I, putting on the hatch, "was provisioned and manned ready to go to sea when the gale hurled her into dry dock."

"Do you say that she is a pirate?" said Belle, looking curiously round her.

"Anything you please," I answered. "Something equipped to be of use to the rebs."

I threw open a cabin door with some notion in my head of finding her papers. The bunk contained bed-clothes. A small quantity of male wearing apparel was hanging at the bulkhead. Here too was a sea-chest, which I found open, and on lifting the lid of a little side locker in it, I met with a bag of fifty pieces of gold in Spanish money.

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Each piece was large, and worth about thirty shillings. I found no papers here, nor in the next berth, which contained the instruments for navigating the little ship, though the first cabin I entered had undoubtedly been the captain's.

I hunted in vain for any information about the vessel. From the circumstances of the money having been left on board, I judged her people had gone away in a hurry, for no commander of a vessel of this size was like to leave fifty pieces of gold behind him. I guessed that when they had found the island adrift, they had carried their boat bodily to the water to gain the mainland, whilst the channel remained narrow and passable. Or the sense that their schooner was as utterly lost to them as though she had gone to the bottom, determined them to destroy her papers. Anyway, I could learn nothing about this vessel, her destination, her name, her paternity, or her character. I searched the forward berths, in the starboard one of which I found the carpenter's chest and a number of muskets in racks. This little room indeed was sheathed with small arms, and was without a bunk. Whilst I hunted, Belle was looking through the books in the hanging shelves. I was hot and thirsty, and reckoned that we had now been three-quarters of an hour upon the island.

"What have you there?" said I.

There were about fifty volumes, and amongst them were Shakespeare, Fielding, Calderon, Cervantes, Sir Charles Grandison, Dampier, Gil Blas, Byron, and the like. A pleasant mixture—English, French, and Spanish—and all good.

"The captain of this boat has excellent taste in literature," said I, taking down the first of the topmost volumes, one of Byron's works.

I looked at the fly-leaf and read: "Alfred Baynard, London, 1840." But this might be no more than the signature of a former possessor.

"It is time to be seeing to the boat, Belle," said I; "let us be going."

"I shall be glad to be gone," she answered.

"I am thirsty," said I, "and shall save our fresh water if I can, by getting a drink here."

"I am very thirsty too," said Belle, "but I'll not drink any water in this vessel. I'll wait until I can get a bottle of champagne in the boat."

I laughed, and helped her up the steps. I had observed a small scuttle-butt secured abreast of the galley, and made straight for it. I gave it a kick, and found it half full. I dropped the dipper into it and brought up a tall draught.

"Drink!" said I.

"I will wait for the champagne," answered Belle.

The water was warm, and by no means refreshing, but it assuaged my thirst, and now knowing that Belle was thirsty, I was in a hurry that she should be satisfied according to her wishes. But before leaving this schooner I determined on pocketing the bag of gold. I should be plundering no man. The first crew that boarded this island and explored the schooner would take the money, if they took nothing else; and if no crew came on board, then the island and the schooner would go to pieces, and the gold fall to the bottom of the sea. So I made up my mind to take it. I mention this trifling circumstance that you may understand why we hung about this little vessel so long.

I took the bag out of the chest. It was a canvas bag, and pleasantly heavy, and I showed Belle one of the pieces. We stood admiring it. It was a handsome coin, the gold of a rich yellow, but I cannot now recollect how it was stamped.

"Now," said I, slipping the bag into my pocket, "let's be off."

It required some maneuvering, however, on my part, to get Belle cleverly and carefully over the rail on to the land

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alongside. The schooner, it is true, had a list to port, but she sat tall, was high and dry, and her side was not easily climbed by a girl. I had lifted her sheer over the rail ; now I opened the gangway, and putting the bowline around her as before, and giving her a rope to hold on by, I lowered her by a turn round a pin, and she reached the ground in safety. I then swung myself down, and we walked in the direction of the boat.

The more I saw of this island the more I was astonished. The combined forces of nature had so swept it as to seem to leave it but a little more than a perfect bed of roots : not that there was not plenty of soil, but it was thin, and the roots showed through it. I took it that upon these roots and other timber in the water beneath the island floated, and that whilst the soil remained firm, the astonishing fabric would continue compact.

“It will be something to talk about,” said I.

“We shall not be believed,” said Belle.

“If this island had been a hill, what then ? It would have gone down, I suppose.”

“Haven’t hills and mountains their foot upon the bottom of the sea ?” asked Belle.

As these words were pronounced we opened the scene of shore where the boat lay. What do I say ? Where the boat had *lain*. I uttered a yell, and Belle stopped dead, and stared as dumbly as the tree alongside of her.

The boat was off and away, and it had taken with it the fallen length of tree to which I had attached it !

She was about six times her own length distant, but though the end of the tree came close to the shore, it was out of reach by some yards, and I could not have waded to catch hold of it, for the sides of the island fell abrupt, and it was the deep water of the Atlantic under them.

The monkey at sight of us sprang from thwart to thwart, howled and flourished his arms, rushed to the masthead, descended head foremost, and seemed to go mad. He was

not so mad as I. Without regard to Belle's presence, I cursed myself for all the idiots I could lay my tongue to. Who the deuce could foresee that a boat would sneak a tree off the shore and go away to sea with it on its own account?

"I'll have her!" said I, and was tearing off my coat.

Belle screamed, and her fingers fastened themselves like steel fish-hooks in my collar.

"Look!" she cried, "you don't see it?"

But I did *then*. Right between the boat and the trunk of the tree sparkled the black wet fin of a shark. It hung motionless, like some demon sentry of that boat, showing nothing but the bayonet of the musket it shouldered.

"Do you see it?" shrieked Belle. "If you enter the water it would dash at you and mangle you in an instant!"

"Oh yes, I see it," I answered, and then I fell mad again, and ran about, and cursed myself for my folly in ever leaving the boat, but hearing this Belle exclaimed:

"Suppose you had left me in the boat, and it had slipped off whilst you were ashore. What should I have done?"

"Oh," I groaned, "you might have thrown an oar over, and made shift under my directions whilst I shouted to you to row her a little this way, and then a little that way, until her stem came to my hand. Curse that shark!" I shouted. "We cannot—we *must* not lose that boat. I'll kick out, and raise a hullabuloo, and I'll be in the boat before he can attack me."

Again I began to pull off my coat, and again she hooked me with fingers made steel by love and terror.

"He'll flash at you, and take your legs off long before you reach the boat," she cried. "You shall not go. If you go, I will go too. You cannot shake me off, and horrible as the fancy is, I'd rather be killed by that shark than be left alone on this island to starve and to fall mad,

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for what use could I make of that little schooner ? It is God's will."

And now she began to drag me from the edge of the water with the power of a man.

"Keep your wits, and look about you, and try to think of some better plan for saving that boat than swimming with me to it, with a certainty of being torn to pieces by sharks. For if one fin is visible, may not many be concealed ?"

"All right, Belle, all right," I said to the panting and weeping girl ; "but if that boat's not to be got by swimming it is lost to us."

She released me, and hid her face.

My eyes roamed like a lunatic's over the island. There was a carpenter's chest in the schooner, and I conceived the idea of making a little raft, and shoving off with anything that I could fashion into an oar. But the timber was too heavy, or worthless to me as too light. The night would have fallen before I could have chopped or sawn the trunks of trees to provide me with the materials for a raft, and when the morning came what would have been the drift of the boat through the night ? I might be sure the distance it was carried would never be measured by me on the most unmanageable, perilous, and unwieldy of all the floating inventions of man. And then again, after I had constructed a raft, how was I to launch it ?

I felt a sudden passion to leap into the water and get upon the tree, but was hindered by the sight of that deadly fin. In the slight swell the tree rolled. If I went along it upon my knees I saw very easily it would throw me into the water. If I sat upon the tree as if it were a horse, then my legs would be in the sea and at the mercy of the shark.

Ever since I went in a ship I had learned to think with horror of sharks. Every sailor I knew had a hideous story to tell of the brutes. My blood ran cold when I thought

of the quadruple rows of pointed teeth and the gleam of the dirty white belly in the rush of the whole hellish fish for its victim. I was amazed that the boat should have got away with the tree, but I did not need to reflect long to perceive how it stood. In the first place, there was a great weight of minute silver fish all around the island, and I did not and do not question that the pressure of this wonderful, ponderous, metallic-like body under the boat eased its stem off the shore, and helped the stream of tide to give the painter a drag. The tree lay with a sharp incline, and it seemed to have run out of its bed of clay as though it had been coated with oil. I looked at the place where it had lain, and saw that the groove was butter-smooth.

It was frightfully tantalizing to see that boat apparently close at hand, and yet, thanks to its deadly sentinel, as distant as if she had been out of sight. She was certainly in the suck of some current, and was moving away northwest, the tree going with her. I could have howled aloud like a madman. There is no good in your saying, You should have done this, or you should have done that, and you were no sailor to lose that boat. I answer, What would you have done? You will please remember that I stood alone. I had thoughts of breaking out a cask, and making a canoe of it, and paddling to the boat. But with my single hands I was unable to break out a cask, and it is perhaps fortunate for me that this was so, because casks have an ugly trick of rolling and capsizing, and I have little doubt had I put to sea in a cask I should have made a straight course for the shark's belly. I could see no small stuff to weave into some basket or raft. Everything was tight, iron-hard, sheering deep down, and the roots which were visible were short and of no good. What then would *you* have done?

A thought came into my head, and I rushed to the schooner and went hand over hand up her side. Just

when I gained the deck Belle cried out, "Oh, Walter, please send me down a drink of water."

This I instantly did by attaching the full dipper to a thin line and lowering it into her little hands as she stood under the bends. I then ran below to the carpenter's chest, and took out of it an ax, which I felt, and found reasonably sharp. I have said that the wreck of the foretop-mast lay over the bow with its yards across and gear rove. I sprang forward and unrove the signal halliards, which I coiled upon my arm, and then jumped down upon the land with the ax. Belle stared at me wildly, possibly thinking that I meant to enter the sea and fight the shark. I had no such intention. I securely attached the end of the line to the handle of the ax, and telling Belle to stand clear, swung the tool, lasso-wise, straight out at the tree. The ax struck and fell into the water. I coiled down afresh and again swung the ax, and missed that fateful length of timber.

"What do you hope to do?" cried Belle.

"This ax is sharp," said I, coiling down for the third time," and I want the edge to pierce and hook that infernal tree, and then I can gently draw it ashore."

"You will never do it," she exclaimed, eyeing the ax, and then the piece of floating timber, and what made her wiser than I you may conjecture ; but I have since thought that I was as great a fool in hoping to sink that ax into the solid timber by flinging it, as in making the boat fast ashore without securely testing its moorings.

I continued to swing the ax, nevertheless, until I was dog-tired, and meanwhile the boat and the accursed beam it was towing were imperceptibly sliding off northwest, so that by the time I had done with heaving the ax, the tree was almost out of reach of it. There was a bright small wind which kept the water shivering, and set up a dull moaning amongst the weird, fire-blasted trees in the island. In the agony of my temper at the loss of that

boat, and my entire helplessness, I clenched my hands till the finger-nails drew blood from the palms, and the white sweat rained down my face. Our lot as castaways had been lamentable had the men deserted us on the Rocas, but what was to be our fate on a floating island, that in any hour might loosen and go to pieces?

Belle came and held my arm, whilst I stood motionless, staring out to sea.

"What a dreadful doom for the monkey," said she.

CHAPTER XXII.

A VISIT.

No good could attend my watching the boat, and whines and groans were equally useless. When Belle pronounced the name of the monkey, I cursed the brute as the author of all our misfortunes. I said it had evilly possessed the *Glendower* and wrecked her, and now it had lost us our boat, and with her our only chance of making a port or being picked up. My God ! what were we to do ? And here I turned abruptly and gazed at the schooner.

“Of course,” said I, “she must be our home until I can light on some plan to get away. But how are we to get away ? Were ever couple so fearfully and awfully imprisoned ? No boats—a fabric of soil and roots which dissolves under our feet as we converse—and the mere fact of the Rocas being at hand is quite enough to keep this sea barren of ships, unless they are commanded by ring-necked idiots of the Bowser type.”

We slowly approached the schooner. Belle was looking at her thoughtfully.

“If,” said she after a minute, “this island should go to pieces, surely it will leave that schooner afloat ?”

I stared at her, then at the vessel, and then rather sheepishly answered :

“Why, yes, she’s staunch ; she might be able to keep afloat.”

For I protest, on my word, that until Belle put it into my head, it had never crossed my mind to consider that our safety lay in the schooner if the island sunk under her.

This raised my spirits as high as they were before low, and in a sudden transport I took Belle in my arms and kissed her, and told her that she was the bravest girl any man had ever been shipwrecked with, and that she was a much better sailor than I, with an intellect infinitely shrewder.

She colored and sparkled, and enjoyed this passage immensely. Indeed, so far, I had not been very endearing (seeing that she was to be my wife if we were spared). But then I was an awkward fist at love-making at the best; a young grampus of twenty, who for years had been living the rough life of the sea, knowing little or nothing of shore usage, seeing little or nothing of women, a lonely boy in a watch, a lonely young mate in a watch, the associate for months at a spell of hoarse tarpaulins and midshipmen who swore frightfully. How should such a shell make love?

Before going on board I walked round the schooner, and again carefully examined her, and saw that she was perfectly sound. The slanting trees made a little shade, but where the sun broke it was hissing hot, and the light came raining down like scalding water. I clambered up the side, and then hauled Belle up as before. "And now," said I, pausing to breathe and looking round me, "it is quite clear that this is to be our home unless something comes close and sees the signal we must make. If nothing comes we must wait for the island to disappear under our keel, and we shall then be better off than we were in an open quarter boat. I tell you, Belle, it is a great god-send to us that this little ship should be here. She is a shelter for the present; she is a promise of life by-and-by, and meanwhile she is as loving as a mother, and will feed us."

Seeing the rod lying near the pump I dropped it into the well, and it came back dry to my hand. I tried the brake, and found it light and easy to work. The next thing to be done was to light the galley fire. I had noticed a little

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store of coal in the corner of the caboose, and expected to find plenty for our wants in the forepeak under the fore-castle. The gunpowder and other combustibles in the hold made me feel nervous whilst I lighted the fire, whilst Belle in her straw hat and Miss Parker's dress leaned in the doorway and looked on, with her face and smile like a sunbeam. Somehow she did not greatly take this shipwreck to heart, she did not realize the tragedy of it to its height. Perhaps we were both too young to do so.

I returned the piece of beef to the coppers to boil for our dinner. It was fair sweet meat, and as good as any I was likely to come across by hunting. I then told Belle to attend to the fire, and went into the bows with the ax. Here I chopped and cut away the ruin of the foretopmast which lay over the port bow, and the heap tumbled on to the land, leaving us a clear fore-castle. The bowsprit stood unsprung, the foresail was bent and furled, so too were the mainsail and gaff-topsail, and the winged canvas.

I stood, ax in hand, pondering the matter of the island, and wondering when we might expect the hour of its dissolution. From what part of the coast it had come I could not imagine; the current had sucked it and the trees had sailed it, and seeing that we were leagues distant from the nearest point of the Brazilian coast, the wonderful fabric of gnarled twisted stuff, of withered bush and leaning tree, and growth of strange spikes and spears denuded by fire had already made a considerable voyage all compact, and I could not see that it showed any signs at present of breaking up. The blue sky thrilled through the tufts on high, and the tense spikes sang in the heat like touched harp-strings; nothing crawled, nothing lived, I saw no movement of grass. We were the only living things on that island.

I easily understood that the equipment of a vessel of this sort would not be lacking in nearly all the essential features of sea furniture. I wanted a lamp, oil, wick or can-

dles and matches, and quite knew that such things must be in the ship, and I quitted Belle to seek them. I entered the cabin, and as though by instinct went straight to the berth in which I had met with the carpenter's chest, and here on shelves were all I wanted. Boxes of short candles, long boxes of wax lucifer matches, and two or three little lanterns of foreign make, each with a handle like a coffee-pot.

I had brought the ax with me, and after lighting a lantern, I opened the lazarette hatch and dropped below. I was extremely wary, for I never could tell but that gunpowder might be stowed here as well as in the main hold. I carefully swept the light round the little place, and was made easy by the discovery that whatever the cases and casks might contain, gunpowder formed no portion of the lading here. I put down the lamp and split open a case; it was full of large white biscuits. I split the lid of another case, and got more biscuit. Then a third case, in which were stowed two or three layers of bottled fruits. The casks contained fresh water. There was no brandy, no rum, nothing to drink but water on board this schooner. Never did I so feel the need of a nip. I have often recalled this movement of discontent and laughed at it as an expression of the proverbial growling character of the sailor. Here was plenty to eat and plenty of cold water to drink, and here was a little schooner under our feet, buoyant, unwrung, ready for the launch when the time should come, and I stood in the lazarette, not lifting up my heart to the Lord in gratitude, but grumbling under my breath because there wasn't a drop of spirits to drink.

I put a handful of biscuit in my pocket, and went into the cabin where the nautical instruments lay on a little table. The chronometer was old, and had stopped, and could be of use only as a clock. I took down a telescope, and picked up an old and worn sextant, which I examined,

as I did the glass, thinking I should find an inscription. But this was to prove a nameless schooner.

It was past noon, and having examined the sextant I put it down and went on deck with the telescope, first carefully extinguishing the candle with thumb and finger, and placing the lantern on the cabin table. The boat was in sight about a mile off with the tree in tow. I never found it harder than now to realize that this island was a piece of land adrift, far away out in the sea, and perfectly simulating the aspect of land, with its blighted trees and withered bushes. At what pace was it progressing, and what was its course? However, I was no longer possessed with the madness that had visited me when I found the boat was lost to us. The schooner was staunch, and she was bound to float when the island went to pieces, and in that case we should be better off than had we kept to the quarter boat. She was equipped for a voyage, and was a wonderful godsend to us, as I have said, and it is no miracle, and nothing preposterous or impossible that I am describing, but a fact well within the knowledge of every student of physical geography, and of all who have experience of the power and the might of the hurricane.

When the meat was cooked I carried it below, and Belle followed with plates and black handled knives and forks which we found in the dresser drawers. The meat proved to be buffalo hump: it was hump of some sort, very delicate to the palate, and crisp and sweet in its resistance to the teeth, and I was mighty pleased I had not carried out my first idea of flinging it overboard. This hump and white biscuit yielded us a good meal, and we washed it down with water warm from the scuttle butt.

"This is a queer voyage we are making, Belle," said I. "Did ever any one read the like of it? How shall we pass the time?"

She pointed to the book shelves. I shrugged my shoulders. Like most sailors I was but a small reader

"And how long is the time going to run into? This island may have held together for months, and it may hold out for months to come."

"We are better off here than on the reef," said Belle, whose face was like the spirit of hope with its golden smile and kindling eyes. "And we are better off on this schooner than we should be in the open quarter boat. We must keep a lookout for ships, and I was thinking," said she artlessly, whilst I was boiling the meat, "that if a ship should heave into sight, a sure signal—perhaps the only sure signal to bring her to us—would be in making a great smoke by burning a tree."

"Thank you," said I, "and setting fire to the island with several tons of gunpowder in this vessel's hold. We must be rescued without smoke, Belle."

When we had dined I took the telescope on deck, and searched the horizon with it. Nothing in sight. It was an old glass but a good one. I leveled it at the boat and saw the monkey sitting on the stern, gravely contemplating the tree in the water. I felt grieved for the poor beast. He was horribly doomed, as Bell had said. There was plenty to eat and drink in the boat, and the unhappy creature must miserably perish of hunger and thirst. Not that I had any sort of affection or regard for the animal with the hangman's face, but I had always thought there was something beyond the ordinary monkey in him. He was as human and hideous as some natives I have seen, and he pleaded to me out of his humanity and ugliness.

The sea was shuddering under the sun as though sick with the roasting heat. I went aft, and by the schooner's compass found the breeze about north. The trees hummed in their stunted tufts. They looked like skeletons or aged men bowed, and the noise the wind made amongst them raised the fancy that their talk was about death and the hour when the grave was to open under them. I mused a little whilst I stood looking at the boat, thinking that if a

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ship should appear, how we were to make our existence known to her. The trees wrapped the schooner up from observation from the sea, and I guessed that if I flew a flag from the main-topmast head it would not be seen, unless the ship came close in, and there was small chance of that, for fifty to one but at sight of us ninety-nine out of every hundred commanders would shift helm and sing out for a cast of the lead. No ship would venture close, though she might heave to and send a boat, and I wondered what I ought to do to make the people in the boat know that there were human beings in distress ashore.

There was a flag locker near the wheel, and it was full of flags, most of them being the Marryat Code. In this locker I found the British, the Brazilian, the Danish, and the Peruvian colors.

There were four sides to the island, and after some pondering I made up my mind to climb four trees (one at a time) with the ensigns, hammer and spikes, and one of the flags would certainly catch the eye. I took the four ensigns and placed them upon the skylight, then descended for the hammer and nails.

Belle said : " What are you doing ? "

I answered by asking what she was doing.

" Let me read this lovely passage from Byron," said she.

I explained the business I had in hand, and added that I did not consider just at present that our situation was such as to justify us in admiring poetry.

" Four flags ! " cried she. " The island will look like a pavilion at a Bouville fair," and the image catching her fancy she fell a-laughing, just with the same ease of heart in her laughter as though the island was indeed a pavilion ashore, and we were in it eating gingerbread.

I left her on deck and dropped over the side with the flags and hammer, looked about me for a tree that showed well to seaward, and observing one that was thin, with a projecting bough or two upon it that would enable me to as-

cent with ease, made for it. I walked daintily, though I never did believe anything poisonous moved in this floating piece of land. When I came to the foot of the tree I slung the British ensign on my back, stuck the hammer into my shirt, and began to climb. The beautiful marvelous silver coil of fish sparkled close in at the sides of the island, and the water trembled in a deeper blue by contrast.

I had reached a little more than half way high, when I felt the tree giving, and sure enough in a few seconds, whilst I held on with the tenacity of a baboon, the tree, depressed by my weight and already declined half root out by the hurricane, sank to the earth, I on top of it. It was a gentle motion, startling nevertheless. Had I climbed to the top of the tree and it had then given, I should have been soused among the little fishes. As it was, I came down on the black wet soil close to the edge, and my nose began to bleed; the blood mingled with the caking of the mud on my face, and made me look, I daresay, very fit to be an inhabitant of this blasted island. I shouted to Belle that I was all right, and sought for another tree, convinced by my experience that this floating fabric of soil and growth was in a very putrid condition indeed, and that it needed but a small gale to set the whole thing wallowing to pieces.

I now made the ascent of a tree comfortably and safely, and nailed the British flag, jack down, to it. I confess some spirit came to me out of that flickering bunting when I got down and looked up at it. It was a constant signal all day long whilst there was daylight, and it was an appeal intelligible to every nation of the earth. I made the turn of the island and nailed the other three flags to as many trees, all of which I scrambled up without difficulty. I then walked to the water's edge, and knelt and washed my face with repeated splashings of brine, most delicious and cooling.

The wonderful coil of fish took no heed of me. It was a sort of tameness, however, that was not shocking. I had

never seen such a sight before, and could not be moved or surprised by its behavior. And now I returned to the little ship, and at once went below into the lazarette, where I hunted for and found the tea and sugar with which I knew the vessel must be provided. I brought up enough to supply our present needs, and Belle put the kettle on the galley fire whilst again I swept the horizon for sight or sign of a sail. But there was nothing to be seen but the boat and the tree. It was hard upon sundown. There was a long, rather large swell in the sea, and it came along with the wind out of the north, running athwart of the burning path of the sun in hills of crimson fire. The motion of the island upon the swell was quite easily felt. The structure solemnly rose and sank with a motion so entirely novel to my stomach that I confess I felt sea-sick. Large bodies of water went rolling past the island's sides, and some hissed over the slopes, foaming as they went, and occasionally tearing out a tree or a bush that stood in their path.

We made and drank tea upon deck. The tea was black, poor, and milkless, but it was better than cold water, and helped us when sweetened to swallow the biscuit and the jam we had spread upon it. In the great light of the furnace in the west the trees threw strokes of black shadow across our decks, and marvelous it was to see these shadows moving with the solemn swing of the island. I asked Belle where she would like to sleep. She answered : "In the cabin."

"On the locker ?" said I.

"Yee," she answered.

"Well, it will be less stuffy than one of the berths," I exclaimed.

"Where will you sleep ?" she asked.

"Do not talk of sleep," said I. "I shall keep a nodding lookout throughout the night on deck."

"Let me remain with you," she said, putting on one of her pleading looks.

I answered that it was injurious to the health to sleep on deck. If she should be waking she could come up and take a look round, and then return.

"What a solemn, magnificent scene is this!" I exclaimed in a burst of enthusiastic admiration.

The sunset had gilded the island, and many of the trees glowed like shafts of gold ; and those which had been made loathsome by the passion of storm were now touched and chaste and shining with the spirit of the splendid night. The tufts took the metallic sheen of silver, the fire-withered bushes glowed in purple, a red light ran between the shadows on the grass, and this strange piece of earth—rent from its mother by the havoc of hurricane, now glorified by the dying light of nature—was like a poem set to music by the large pulse and steady cradling of the western folds.

We sat together, talking over our strange adventures and marvelous deliverances, the chances for our lives that the future held, whilst the redness went out of the sky, and the island started into skeletons in the sudden liquid dusk, brimful of the stars of the equator. A dead calm and a large swell, and the night was with us, and nothing in sight when the darkness fell but the quarter boat about two miles distant, and we could not help remembering that the monkey had not eaten or drunk that day.

We lighted a couple of lanterns and hung them up in the cabin. For supper, we ate some slices of cold hump and biscuit, but neither of us could drink the cold tea, and I so much lamented the absence of a sup of rum, that I started up in a determined hunt, thinking that surely there would be a bottle hidden somewhere in a locker. No, there was nothing to drink but water. I sat at the table and smoked a pipe, lighting the tobacco with great care, whilst Belle read a volume from one of the shelves. We had talked so much that there was little more to say. I watched her, and I think she knew it, for sometimes a

smile, not born of the book, would pass across her face. The candle-light shone upon her fair hair, and her long eyelashes made her seem like a painting whilst she looked down, without movement, keeping her eyes upon the page.

It was about half-past nine when she lay down. I extinguished a candle and left one burning, and carried a chair on deck. It was not likely I could sleep below. Our situation was such that I might be required to answer to a demand that should signify life or death at any instant. My sweetheart's life was dear to me, nor will you suppose that I undervalued my own. On deck I could see the ocean and mark any changes in the weather, and a sailor is like a horse that stands and sleeps. Indeed, he is a poor sailor who cannot sleep anywhere and anyhow. Yet never did a man keep a lonelier watch than this. I found no sense of companionship in the presence of Belle in the cabin. I looked at her through the open skylight, and she was sleeping, and her soul was as far away from me as the stars. The little tract of land stretched black from the schooner, and the trees shot gaunt and ghastly into the gloom in a leaning, hurrying way, all in one direction, towards the sea ; the bushes and other growths resembled creatures of grotesque bulk, horrible with the shapelessness that was yet determinable into affrighting aspects by the eye of imagination. The tops of the trees seemed to be hung with huge rooks' nests, and the stars swung between. There was no musquito, no fire-fly : life, to its inmost sources, had been slain in that island. A solemn, dreary, recurring sound was the hollow wash of the swell, as it sped darkly with the sob of a giant past the island's sides, sometimes overleaping the little territory and crumbling into foam, and hissing and shining with the light of the sea.

I was ever a fanciful youth, and this was an hour and this was a scene in which my imagination was bound to go to work. Once I thought I saw a figure in white walking near the tree which had fallen with me, then I fancied I

could hear a sound of distant chousing, as though Italian sailors were singing a hymn a long way off upon the water ; no doubt it was a music made by some faint passage of air in the trees, but I strained my ears, nevertheless, and my eyes too, but saw nothing, and when I listened I heard nothing.

I slept and awoke, slept and awoke in that chair. Every time I awoke I looked to see if Belle was all right, and then sent my gaze round the scene of darkness. All through that night the girl slept soundly, but I was awake when the dawn broke, trying to determine with a telescope some object which the melancholy light had scarcely yet revealed. From the schooner's deck I commanded a good height, and could probably see eight or nine miles. There was not only the thickness of the land, there was the full broadside of the little ship herself from keel to waterway.

As the light grew I saw that the object that had bothered me was the quarter boat which we had lost yesterday, and it was now about four miles off ; but whilst I was looking the sun flashed his light across the sea, and I started at the apparition of a tiny shape of pearl upon the horizon, right on a line with the boat. I held my eye glued to the glass, for I wanted to find out—first, whether it was the topmost canvas of a ship ; next, if she was approaching the island ; and, finally, if she was steering northwest, which I should soon find out by the disappearance of that spot of light. It hung steadfast and grew, and now I was sure that the sail was not that of a ship, say her royal or top-gallant sail, but the lug or mainsail of a small vessel, and after a few minutes I had satisfied myself that it was a lug.

A pleasant wind was blowing, and I thought from the look of the heavens that this capful would by and bye prove a bagful, for the sky was filled with arrows and plumes which ran in a vast and beautiful sweep or curve ;

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the sun lighted up all those little clouds into the very tints and sparkle of the whites of the oyster shell.

"What are you looking at?" said Belle.

I turned quickly, and we kissed as sweethearts do.

"There's a boat out yonder under sail, seemingly making for our boat. Do you see that white spot? But look for yourself."

When she had caught sight of the boat which had by this time risen to its gunwale, she exclaimed:

"Can they be a party of shipwrecked men who have sighted this island, and hope to find safety here?"

Scarce had she said this when it flashed upon me that the boat might contain the men whom we had left on the reef, who weary of waiting and hunting, and dreading blindness, which is often caused by brilliantly white sand, had put off, heading sailor fashion for a "chance."

I grew hot and agitated, and gazed steadfastly again, and now I could not doubt that she was a ship's quarter boat, and that her sail was a lug, and this being so, and the Rocas being comparatively adjacent, then her proving another ship's quarter boat in distress would be too improbable as a coincidence for any satisfaction that I could get out of the thought.

"By Jove, Belle!" said I, "I believe they're the seven men we left behind us, and if they sight this island they will certainly pay us a visit."

She turned pale. I could see that my conjecture had seriously alarmed her.

"What is to be done, Walter?" she asked, whilst she looked at the white sail which was all that was visible on that trembling, flashing expanse. I could not answer her then; I required time for reflection. I looked again at the boat; she was traveling fast, and heading straight for our own little craft; I could distinguish men in her, and had not the least doubt that they were the survivors of the *Glendower*, I trembled with excitement and alarm,

I would rather have drowned Belle and myself than that she should fall into the hands of those men.

I watched them. They approached the quarter boat that was adrift. When they got alongside they dropped their lug-sail, and two or three men got into the empty boat, manifestly to overhaul her.

"They will certainly come on to this island, Walter," said Belle. "What shall we do?"

"We must hide," I answered. "They are not likely to remain here when they see what sort of an island it is. They will know whose boat ours was, and wonder what has become of us, and when they don't see us they will think we have perished. I wish I had not nailed those flags up there. They look too recent."

"Where are we to hide?" said Belle, looking along the decks of the schooner.

"Not on board; in the island."

I took another look at the boat, and could see them handing the provisions and instruments out of her. I then crossed the deck with Belle, and after a careful examination of the island, I said:

"There are two bushes; do you see them?"

"Yes."

"One will hide you, and the other will hide me, and no man among them will dream that we are so hidden. Anyway, if they are to land, it is our business to make them believe this island abandoned."

Old Bowser's telescope was in the quarter boat, and I judged the men would take it and quickly bring it to bear upon this little, queer, floating estate, but I knew by experience that they would not be able to make out the figure of the schooner amongst the trees until they had drawn close, so that Belle and I could move about without fear of their detection. In fact, I wanted to make sure that they meant to pay us a visit before I took the trouble to hide, and meanwhile, with the foresight of the sailor, I ran below,

brought up the remains of the cold hump and some biscuit, and we breakfasted.

When we had eaten I put the food and plates into the galley, and Belle and I drank plentifully of cold water, by which time I did not need to turn the glass seawards again to know that the boat had hoisted her sail, and was heading straight for us. She was then about four miles off, and at her rate of sailing she would not arrive much under three-quarters of an hour. I thought it advisable, however, to lower Belle immediately over the side, and dropping after her, hand over hand, I walked with her directly to one of the two bushes which I had selected. Both bushes were stout, and though blasted like the rest of the vegetation, they were yet clothed with a close-grained texture of something that had probably been as lovely as the silver-leaf in its day. They both stood at some distance from the schooner, and were situated at about a hundred footsteps one from the other. I knelt down, and pressing my head into the bush I intended for Belle, crushed through the rotten stuff, and then I crushed my way upwards so as to make a hollow for her reception. This was easy, for the fire of the storm had rendered everything as brittle as the dead leaf of the late autumn.

I came out, and told Belle to go in. She did so with admirable courage, dropping on her knees, and pulling off her hat and thrusting in her shining head, and in a minute she was standing up inside, and as clean disappeared as if she had been burnt to ashes.

"Now that you are there, you had better remain there," said I. "You need not stand."

"I shall be glad when they go," she answered, and her voice sounded muffled in the bush.

"Take care you don't sneeze if the men should trudge past," said I. "Do not move if they approach. I would rather they should discover us awaiting them than find us hiding."

Through the trees I commanded a view of the sea, and watched the boat coming along whilst I stood at the side of the bush in which I intended to conceal myself. The breeze had slightly freshened, and she was coming along quickly, and well within the time that I had supposed. Her forefoot struck the soil, and her men came ashore, leaving one to watch the boat clear on the swell. This I saw, whilst I stood in the bush, through little holes I easily made in the rotten stuff. There were six seamen not counting the man who waited in the boat, and they lurched as if they were drunk, and no doubt most of them were drunk. They always would be drunk whilst they had it, and in our boat they had found champagne. Their various postures, and attitudes of tipsy amazement as they stood gazing about them, were incomparably fine. At first they did not offer to advance, as though they were afraid: they looked at the trees, then round upon the island, then at the schooner, then at the sea as if it were a refuge.

Presently I heard one say: "Blast my sight, if it ain't afloat! D'ye feel the heave in it, bullies?"

"What country's this anyhow?" exclaimed another. "Is it a piece of real geography? And what's them blamed flags a-flying for? Tell yer what, mates," the fellow croaked, "it ain't in nature, and so it ain't lucky."

The man who had just spoken was the most ignorant seaman I have ever met. He believed in a hundred absurdities, and I was glad to find him voluble, even if he was more or less tipsy, because I counted upon him frightening the others.

"If they sent their boat adrift," said one of the men; "they looks to be saved by that there schooner. A blooming save!"

"Why don't they show theirselves?"

"What's them flags a-flying for? exclaimed a man.

"It's more like a fair than a shipwreck."

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"They're all distressed colors, can't yer see, you old owl," said a fellow with a hoarse voice and a coarse red beard. "If they're not aboard, then they've been took off," so speaking, he made a staggering step or two, and the whole party set itself in motion.

But they often arrested their steps to stare about them, and it was clear that the extraordinary circumstance of the island being afloat, and heaving like a ship, frightened the dogs to the very souls.

"How comes a schooner in the middle of an island?" said one of them. "Was this here a piece of dockyard gone adrift?"

"This was a brig called the *Rachel*," croaked the man with the strong red beard, "lying off the Island of Nevis when I was ashore there. Lucky for me my ship went to pieces. A hurricane grew, and busted in half an hour. All was blackness, lightning, and hail as big as hens' eggs. Ten vessels foundered, and two was blowed ashore, one of them the *Rebecca*, with the cook dressing the captain's dinner in the galley, and three men asleep in the fo'scle. I wisited her along with a man named Tom Smith. Blight me, if I could have believed it, if I hadn't seen it."

"Here it is over again," said a man. "I'm cussed if I like the notion of going aboard that vessel. Who ever saw trees like these?" and he stared up with an intoxicated leer. "They've all been stripped bald, and then been given wigs to keep 'em warm. Think of a tree in a wig! Ho, ho," he growled in laughter. "Well, damn me, if I like it."

"Come on, come on," said one of the men, and with that the little company of seamen, more or less drunk, trudged with lurches, and curses, and much marveling over the long boughs that writhed in their passage, and I lost sight of them, as one after another they hauled themselves over the schooner's side.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE "NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE."

You will suppose that I did not pass a very happy time in that bush. I was terrified lest the drunken fellows should light their pipes whilst exploring the schooner and blew themselves and us to smithereens. Then was I acting judiciously in secreting myself and Belle, instead of boldly asking the men to recover our boat, which lay out yonder, and victual her afresh from the schooper?

"But no; my mind was fixed on this matter; I would not subject the girl to the mercy of a number of drunken seamen. They might say: "You can come in our boat," and compel her to join them, leaving me ashore if I refused. And no matter what might be in store for us, I was most solemnly intent on preserving Belle from perils and horrors incalculably worse than the bitterest death.

After the men had got aboard the schooner some of them came into the bows where I could see them. They talked loudly with excitement, raised by the novelty of the surroundings and by the drink that colored their voices.

"They've been took off," I heard one man say. "If they hadn't, the galley fire would be burning. He wouldn't let his gal start the day without something to eat, I lay."

"I wish a gale of wind 'ud come," said another man, "and pitch us and this whole withered sight, just as it lives, right into the River Thames, abreast of the Tower, where we could bring up. My Gord! what a show for the

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cockneys ! Sixpence a visit, and come again if you're pleased ! Bill, there's a large fortune a-washing about here."

"There're a good many large fortunes a-washing about where they ain't of no use to a man," said the other. "Look at them trees. Bloomed if you couldn't draw a cork with some of them, and look at them there bushes ! Jiggered if I should like to sleep alone on this 'ere island. Just the sort of place where the spirit of a drowned sailor would crawl ashore out of them fish and walk about, and perhaps come close up to yer, and stare yer full in the face in the middle of the night."

"Stow that rot !" exclaimed one of the men.

"Who's going to sleep in an island that's afloat, and may be sinking under our feet whilst we're a-jawing about her ?" cried a man.

Then a seaman shouted from the quarter deck, and they all went aft.

I longed to call a word of encouragement to Belle, but did not dare exert my voice. I was constantly dreading the momentary explosion, the great red flash, the mighty roar—scarce realizing that my own and Belle's instant annihilation would be certain. I judged by the silence that they were below, perhaps rummaging the cabins, but they would find nothing to please them, for the bag of money was in my jacket pocket. They were not very long below, but the time seemed to run into hours. Once the fellow in charge of the boat grew uneasy and hailed the schooner, and obtaining no reply hailed again, and then I heard him cursing, whilst he looked a little wildly around him. But soon after this, voices sounded on deck, and the six men tumbled down the little ship's side and moved slowly away from her. The man in the boat roared out :

"What have you found ?"

"They've been took off," one of the men cried back. "There's nothing living in the schooner, ne'er a rat."

"Ye ain't going to stop?" shouted the man in the boat.

"There's not a glass of liquor in her, Joe," was the inconsequential answer. "Not a brass farden in money. Plenty of guns and powder to load 'em with."

"So!" thought I, "you've been quick to find *that* out."

But still they stayed, and wrought impatience and anxiety in me into agony. They stooped to look at the soil. They plucked at the scorched growth, and rubbed it as if it were tobacco leaf between their hands. Some walked round the schooner to examine her, and then at last, all coming together again under the vessel's bows, the little company moved slowly towards their boat. And still they looked about them as if they could not understand why we had disappeared, and I knew they commented upon the flags, and upon the boat in the distance, but they talked all at once and rumbled gruffly, and I did not hear what they said.

One man got into the boat, then a second. It was beginning to blow a little briskly, and the sea ran in a small fast wash against the windward side of the island. As the third man was getting into the boat, the fourth in tones I distinctly caught, exclaimed:

"I tell you what, if this 'ere island goes to pieces that there schooner's a-going to float. And how long do land mean to wash about?"

"This ain't land," replied one of the men. "Look and you'll see it's nigh all timber. This 'ere's no island, but a raft, and the schooner may keep all on floating about on top of it for months."

"Come along, come along," cried the man who had charge of the boat. "What's the good of a schooner full of gunpowder, if so be that she *do* go afloat? Whose to know that she ain't full of holes? Let's get picked up in the proper fashion."

After this they all got into the boat, thrust her off with an oar, and hoisted their sail. Though the swell was

somewhat heavy, she had ridden lightly. The keen stem ripped through the water, and she slanted westwards with most of the men sitting to windward, and an occasional sea smoking over the bow, and she tore the water up after her into boiling smother, small as she was, with the lay of her guttering rudder.

I waited until she had gone at least a mile, and there was no chance of our being seen moving amongst the trees. I then sank out of the bush, coated with sweat and leaf-dust, and went to Belle, whom I liberated by hacking the bush open. She came out, looking very white and perspiring, so that she was almost blinded, and her face wore an expression of strong fear.

"Have they gone for good, do you think?" she exclaimed, drying her face and eyes on a handkerchief I had presented to her from the captain's cabin in the schooner.

"Yes, have no fear. Did you not hear them?"

"Only indistinctly."

"They have gone for good, Belle. We shall never see them more. Neither I nor anybody else, for this breeze has hardened, and there is wind in the paleness of the sun."

"What a time it has been!" she exclaimed.

I feared by her manner that she was going to faint, and as I could not provide for her down here, I supported her to the side of the schooner, and hoisted her on deck, and she walked slowly aft, and sat down upon the skylight, upon which a little shade was cast by the heads of some trees.

I procured fresh water and bathed her face, and I refreshed myself, and we then both felt better. I turned the glass upon the boat and saw it in a point of foam. The white lug winked with the sea flash, and she was sailing fast out of sight. They had talked as though they hoped to be picked up. No doubt that was their scheme. They would not much relish the idea of landing in a

Brazilian port with the passengers' gold and jewelry hidden upon them.

A slight blue haze had come into the atmosphere, and when I looked for my boat I could not find her for some time, amid the trouble of the sea. She hopped hollowly to the run of the brine, with a see-saw slant of white thwart, and it came into my head to wonder all of a sudden if they had left the poor old devil of a monkey alone in her out there to miserably starve and perish, with all the agonies of any shipwrecked sailor, but without a God to believe in, or a soul to commend!

I dropped the glass with a pang of mingled pity and horror at the thought, and was in the act of telling Belle what was in my mind, when, to my unspeakable amazement, the monkey came over the side. It climbed by the rope I used, and sat upon the rail for a while viewing us, then sprang upon the deck, cutting several queer capers, as though attached to an organ, and admonished to be humorous by a pull of the tether. He chattered, and looked monstrously human and hideous, but his capers brought him a little closer to us, and when I called in a cordial, encouraging voice, he fell upon all fours, ran to my feet, and tried to spring up my leg. I put him back, and said to Belle, who was laughing heartily, and evidently with a sort of pleasure at sight of the beast:

"They took him out of the boat, and he sneaked ashore unobserved. It is strange that he should leave *them* to come to this island, and not follow *us* on to it."

"It means that the creature mistrusts them," said Belle, looking at the animal.

"I wish he could talk," said I. "I should respect the intuitions of anything that hangs up such a signboard of a mug as that to go through life with. Why don't you speak, you beast?" said I. "Do you want some biscuit and a little water? Follow me."

And I went to the little galley, and the animal, as

though it had understood me, came after me like a dog. When I had seen to him I lighted the galley fire to boil some food for dinner. The boat was out of sight of the naked vision. There was no chance of the smoke of the fire being seen by the men. I again carefully scanned the weather, and saw several signs which made me feel sure that something tough in the shape of wind was coming along by and by. Could the men read the marks of the heavens? If so, their apprehension might determine them upon putting back and taking the shelter the island afforded until the weather was spent. This was a miserable thought, but on reflection I saw that the further they went, the less likely they would be if they resolved to return, and the weather thickened, to hit this little spot of land. They would fly past it, and if they were to leeward it would be as lost to them as if it had gone to the bottom.

I was inhuman enough to feel a secret exultation whilst I thus mused, though my hope really involved the lives of seven men. But I could not help it; they would have abandoned us on the reef, and I would have blown them all up in the schooner sooner than Belle should have fallen into their hands.

We ate our dinner in the little cabin. There was plenty of wind humming through the trees, and singing in the rigging, and it blew down coolly upon us through the open skylight. The swell was growing in weight, and the motions of the island were increasing, and whilst we sat we did often hear the jar and creak of the fabric of the schooner, as though she was beginning to labor a little in the hollows.

"I wonder that the men did not foresee what was coming," said I, looking up at the skylight. "How will it fare with them? But how is it going to fare with us?"

"The island is strongly knitted together, Walter," said the girl.

"But how easily that tree came down with me," I claimed. "It is a fine-weather island, and I dare swear it has known nothing but fine weather since it came adrift from the land. I am sure that anything like a sea will knock it to pieces," and here I fell into a gloomy fit of meditation, and she had the sense to watch me without speaking.

The hardening of the weather was very gradual; it was not until four o'clock that it was blowing a two-reef breeze with a confused swell, made more vicious by the rush of the surge, set in motion by the wind. Even then the island was a dangerous, wonderful, fearful picture for us to look down upon from the altitude of the schooner's deck. Large heaps of water boiled upon it, and now and again a tree would go in a leap with the sling of a curling sea. So far the island, all about where the schooner stood, remained dry. But there was plenty of salt rain, as you will suppose, caused by the shattering spring of the surge against this compacted mass, and our decks were as wet with it as though a tropic thunder shower had just fallen. By seizing a tarpaulin in the main rigging I obtained all necessary shelter for Belle, who could still look about her; and meanwhile I watched the weather and the island with increasing anxiety, for I felt that a critical period had come, and that before midnight the schooner might be afloat in a heavy sea, amidst the drive and grind of whirled and headlong timber.

The sun went down just after seven, and at that hour it was blowing half a gale of wind. The lurid light of the west made a savage picture of the sea. The island was at this hour all a-froth, and every ten minutes, I may say, one or another of its leaning, blighted trees was being slung out of it, drawn by the taut drag of the surge like a decayed tooth out of an old soft gum. The singular platform of land was now slanting somewhat wildly with the seas. It was too unwieldy a mass to rise with any sort of

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buoyancy. The seas rushed over it, and foamed at this hour in the sullen anger of the west upon it, and you will guess that the movement of the schooner was exceedingly uncomfortable to us, but there was no fear of her capsizing; all the motion she gave us was the motion of the island. Now and again some large heads of brine smote the vessel's side, burst high in a shriek of victory, and swept like a squall to leeward.

The sea in the dying light was working heavily all about, and the haze had narrowed the horizon to within a couple of miles of us. Overhead it was blank cloud, a universal ceiling of it, with little rusty scales of flying scud. The sun sank as though he was a globe of scarlet water; he went down in a shapeless bulb of stormy light that smote the deeps of the far east, despite the haze, and you saw for miles that way until the night rushed in. When it fell dark—mercifully it was not pitch dark—the foam leaping and rushing about the island, and often swelling in a low thunder against the weather bends of the little schooner, making her tremble, filled the air with the dim radiance of its own whiteness, and the sea glow was very bright.

We seemed to lie in the heart of a maelstrom. At intervals a sea would drive some fallen tree against the schooner, and send a shock through her and our hearts. This indeed was the dangerous part of our situation, but we were not afloat, and I could do nothing.

Many might think that such a sea as was now running would make short work of washing the schooner off the island; and I expected this to happen, but found that the island acted as a breakwater, against which the seas hurled themselves, then ran mad in froth all about the island without floating the schooner, or even so much as jarring her, unless they drove a piece of timber into her run or bends. It was not cold, despite the swiftness of the brine-sweating wind, and I determined to keep Belle on deck

whilst the sea played, and the island held, and the shrouds rang with the wrath of the sky. Occasionally a stroke of lightning flashed up the darkness, and the thunder rolled down the line of the wind like an action between old men-of-war. It is certain that we must not prophesy at sea. In the morning of that day I could have sworn that this island was good for another two months of ocean wear and tear, and now at the hour of ten o'clock half a gale of wind was blowing, and there could be no doubt that the island was slowly going to pieces.

Slowly, for the trees offered a stubborn resistance; sometimes they fell with the wind, oftener they were uprooted and hurled to a distance by the plunging charge of a sea. Yet a number of trees continued to stand round about the schooner, and I never could have surmized from their stubborn air that the end of the island would be sudden.

It was about two o'clock in the morning when the island went to pieces. It was as though you cut a great raft adrift; every tree fell and blackened, reeling in the white foam, and in a moment the schooner was afloat in the thick of a boiling commotion filled with battering rams. She had no sail to steady her, and her motion was fearfully violent, and every second increased our danger, because the next sea that swept us over might rush some length of tree into the schooner's side, and mortally wound her. Nor could we possibly extricate ourselves unless we made sail on the little ship.

I cannot describe the clamor in the air, the uproar of the charging seas, the furious seething of froth all about the remains of the island, and the wild crying in our rigging as the schooner in her helplessness brought her spars with sickening velocity to windward.

I had taken care to secure Belle to the rigging by a turn of rope. She was also sheltered by the square of canvas. She could not have endured to be alone in the small cabin

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amidst such wild convulsions as the schooner was just now seized with. It was certain we must either contrive to drive clear of this frightful mess of foam and timber, or be prepared to find ourselves holding on to something in the water and the little ship in pieces under us. She was taking in the black seas hard forward in this howling dance, and the thrill of some infernal tree or other as it struck her ran through her like the loosening of her timbers. There was but one thing to be attempted, and that thing I made up my mind to try. The vessel had lost her jib-boom, but her bowsprit stood, and her standing jib and stay-foresail lay furled. I shouted in Belle's ear :

“Have you strength enough to hold on to the wheel ?”

“Yes,” she answered.

“Then come,” I said, and freeing her from the rope, I grasped her by the waist to steady her, and got her alongside the wheel, where I secured her so that she could not possibly be washed overboard. I then put the helm hard up, and told her to hold it in that position until I returned, and saying this I left her, clawing along and often stopping, for it is impossible to describe the leaps and jerks of that deck ; the seas were often sheeting black and spangled with stars of phosphorus over the head-rail, and they fell and foamed in roars of thunder. But the sails must be loosed if the schooner was to be kept afloat, and pulling out my knife I opened it, and with set teeth and a curse at the blinding water that half suffocated and delayed me, I passed my knife through the gaskets of the two head sails, and then put my whole weight upon the halyards of the standing jib.

The sense of danger gave me the power of two men, and I very nearly mastheaded that wing of canvas, but it will be remembered that the schooner was a small vessel. The sail was slatting furiously, and I sprang for the sheet to make it fast before the canvas should thrash itself to

rags. I then put my whole weight upon the stay-foresail. This was a heavier sail, and I could only show but a little more than the head of it. I then clawed my way aft along the lee side, and took the wheel, leaving Belle to stand to windward in idleness.

I was soaked through ; I was hammered and felt crushed and bruised by frequent poundings of heavy weights of water ; however, I was immediately sensible that the canvas was doing its work. The schooner's head was paying off so rapidly that I had to meet her, and she was in motion—the motion that sail confers. She was dead before the wind which bowled with the spite of a pampero over the taffrail. But it did not take us three minutes to go clear of those dreadful breaches of the wrecked island. The schooner was wonderfully buoyant, and swept from hollow to head like a gull, and the cream of the sea washed as high as her figure-head as she stooped to the surge, whilst the small canvas dragged her, and the whole force of the wind drove her. Thank God ! the remains of the island were astern ; we could see nothing now but a pallid patch of water, and the thrilling and awful thumps delivered by the slung trees ceased.

I made Belle sit on the deck just in front of the wheel : I thought she would be sheltered by it and by the intervention of my body. The long black seas raced after us astern, they followed in swift succession, pouring their dangerous heads in the fire and snow of those waters of the sun. We wanted more sail for running, and I was afraid that we should be "pooped," for the schooner was a little ship for this weather and sat low, and with a small list to port, which I supposed she had taken when she was blown ashore, through some shift of cargo.

But what I most dreaded was my ignorance of our whereabouts. I very well know that the Rocas were not far distant, and I could not tell but that I might be steering the schooner slap into them. It would be impossible for me

to distinguish the rocks amid the foaming waters. Any part of the sea looked like those deadly reefs at this hour. Even if I could have guessed at the course we were heading by the sign of a star, nay, even if I had had an active well-lighted compass in the binnacle to steer by instead of a black, paralyzed, hopeless card, I might still have gone on heading the schooner direct for the Rocas in pure ignorance.

It was a time of trial, in which even at sea a man is not often called upon to pass through. At any moment might happen some death-dealing blow of rock, the rending of the schooner's bottom out of her, the falling of her to pieces as though she had been another floating island. There would be no hope for us *then*, and I clung to the helm in an agony of mind, keeping her dead before it, with the fear of the seas astern and the dread of the reef ahead.

But when I thought it was about four o'clock I had then no doubt whatever, after making a mental calculation of our run in the quarter boat, that we had driven well clear of the Rocas, and this relieved my mind to such a degree that it came very near to breaking me down. And now the dread of the reef being gone from me, and as the schooner governed by her helm had proved an excellent sea-boat in running, I begged Belle to go below and take shelter and rest. The pitching of the vessel was steady, and the girl, after standing up as though to try her limbs, waited for me to give her the signal; the companion hatch stood close: in a moment when I spoke she grasped the edge of the companion cover and immediately sank out of my sight.

I cursed my ill-luck in being the only man on board. Somebody was wanted to light the lamp in the cabin, and, above all, I needed help for the halliards. Never dared I let go that little wheel, lest the schooner should broach to and drown herself. Thus was it till the break of day.

The sea worked in coils black as the rushing folds of the great sea-serpent against the cold stone wall of dawn; it still blew fresh, but the wind was without its midnight spite. There were no lights overhead; all was dreary cloud suffused by ashen gray, very slowly working into the brightness of morning. The scud sped with the schooner, and I turned my eyes over the stern to observe our speed by our wake.

Greatly to my astonishment I beheld a big black barque close to on the starboard quarter, running under single reefed topsails and whole forecourse. I immediately recognized her as a Yankee by the fineness of her lines, by her straight stem, by her cotton-white canvas, sky-sail poles, and other signs distinguishable by the nautical eye. As we rose and her bows sank I could see some men on her fore-castle watching us, and a man leaned over the rail aft as though with the intention of speaking as he passed us. I was afraid he would sail on, conceiving that all was well, and my long spell at the wheel had so wearied me that I feared I should not be able to make my voice carry the truth across the roar between the ships. I shouted with all my might for Belle, and to my great joy the brave girl rose through the hatch, carefully holding on. She shrieked when she saw the barque, and flung her hands out at her.

"Hold this wheel that I may hoist a signal, or she will pass us," I shouted.

She grasped the spokes, and with headlong speed I chose a flag—it was not an ensign, it was a code signal—bent it on to the signal halliards, and ran it half-mast high. It was a cry loud and eloquent enough. The barque slightly shifted her course to close us, and she came pitching down upon our quarter, thundering up the seas into an acre of dazzle, and whitening the wind with snowstorms. She was so close that every noise in her was as audible to me as to her people, her creaks and strainings, the yelling of

wind splitting aloft, the groan of wind rushing under the arched foot of the canvas.

"Schooner ahoy!" yelled the man on the barque's poop; he stood erect at the rail, and was dark against the growing light. "Are you in want of assistance?" he shouted, with a strong nasal accent.

"Yes," I answered from the wheel. "I am alone with the girl. For God's sake, help me!"

"All right! all right!" he cried. "Keep up your heart! We'll slow down for you. We can do nothing until this sea moderates," and even as he spoke the barque carried him on to the bows of the schooner, and I saw her name in great white letters over the boiling foam—"Nathaniel Hawthorne, New York." I watched her with passionate anxiety. The first thing she did was to haul up her forecourse and stow it, and she then stowed her foretopsail—those, you shall observe, were the days of single topsails. Still her slide was swift, and the froth flashed and flew about her, and arching seas, whiter than moonshine on sifted snow, curved from her square quarters, as she solemnly sank her stern into the hollow.

"Oh, Walter, she will leave us!" cried Belle, in a heart-broken voice.

"No!" I cried. "Look! they mean to stand by us! What splendid fellows are the Americans! By God, Belle!" cried I, in the tempest of my emotions, "if that monkey yonder were a Yankee, I could love him!"

And in proof of the sincerity of the barque's promise, I beheld the main-topsail yard slowly lowered to the cap, and the reef tackles were then hauled taut. And now the barque lost way. She plunged sullenly, like something wounded in the wing, and I saw, after a few minutes of observation, that if they kept her reduced to that canvas, the schooner would be able to hold her own.

How did my heart throb with exultation! How profound was the spirit of gratitude that was stirred in me!

Indeed, in shipwreck, humanity in man has, to my mind, a more heroic cast, a loftier and more swelling mold, a grander and a more lovely presence than is to be witnessed in the humane action ashore, glorious as it may be. There is nothing more deadly to the spirits of the shipwrecked than their abandonment by their fellow-creatures in a passing vessel. It seems to them an incredible act of wickedness to be left to slowly perish . . . and the wretches knowing it, and calling themselves *sailors*, and proceeding onwards with cool hearts !

Belle was crying like a child, and whether it was brine from my brain or brine from the ocean I cannot say, but my eyes turned dim when I beheld that topsail sink slowly, and looking up, I asked God, in a paroxysm of gratitude, to bless the man who, whatever his nationality might be, was acting the part of a true sailor.

Then followed a dreary time of expectancy—of all those fluctuations of hopes, passions, and fears, which would necessarily belong to such a situation as ours. But a little before noon the sun broke out, and darted a spoke of splendor upon the sea. The clouds scaled away and left lagoons of the vivid blue of the tropics. A breeze of wind was still blowing, and the swell was strong from the north, keeping the barque bowing, but the seas were running lightly, and the foul fiend of tempest had clearly left those waters, on the look-out elsewhere for another job.

I was almost dead with weariness, for I had been standing at the wheel during the greater part of a night and a day, and I felt as though somebody had been secretly fitting corkscrews into the calves of my legs, and was subtly and with damnable malice revolving them as I stood. Belle looked very pale and worn, and I reckoned it about time that our shipwreck came to an end. The monkey sat on top of the galley and watched the barque, but it was not until two that a boat came to us. The wind was then nearly gone, the slope of the sea, as the sailors used

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to call it, was almost perished, and the humps of the swell wheeled through the ocean in glowing lines under the sun that was now shining fiercely.

The barque lowered a boat, and the mate and four seamen came alongside. This mate was a middle-aged man with a perfectly smooth face, over which his skin was so tightly drawn that all his features started at you. He was very square, very strong, and rather fat. He asked me in the pure, sweet notes of the American nose—and Keat's nightingale never piped more delicious melody to the ravished ear—what the matter was with us, and I told him our story, but his skin sat so tight upon his face, there was no room for expression. I could not imagine how he felt whilst I talked. He listened, however, without offering to interrupt me, and when I had made an end, he said—

“ You look dead broke, and so does the lady. I will put you on board the *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, and leave this schooner in charge of a couple of my men.”

The boat was brought alongside. With great care, watching the chance of the lift of the swell, Belle was handed into her. I followed, and two men remained in the schooner. The mate took an oar, and three Yankee blades swept us with the spirit of the mother-land to the shimmering black wet side of the barque. The swell was so heavy, and the barque's roll so steep, that they were obliged to get Belle on board by a basket and a whip. She soared in a passion of fear, which no sensations of hunger, weariness and distress could benumb; but she was safely landed, and in a few moments I crawled up after her like a half drowned cat.

I now observed a female standing on the short poop near the wheel. I was glad to see her for Belle's sake. I had not before caught sight of her. The captain asked us to step on to the poop, and we were so dead beaten that we were thankful to sit upon the skylight whilst we talked.

He was a tall man, with a very grave face and a long goatee beard. He had deep black eyes which glowed, and the expression of his countenance was one of kindness, but all the time I was with him afterwards, I never saw him smile and never heard him laugh. When I had finished my story he looked aft and called "Jessie," the female I had noticed. A stout little woman, with a troublesome cough and a bad cold, approached us.

"Here, my dear," said he, "is a poor young lady who sadly wants looking after. This is my wife," said he to me. Then to her, "Take her below, and give her something to eat and drink, and a shift of clothes. And you shouldn't have come on deck as I told you, for if you neglect that cough of yours, I shall have to poultice you."

The good woman, after making some kind sympathetic observations, took Belle below.

"Captain," said I, "I shall be thankful to you for a glass of grog and a bite of anything."

He put his head into the skylight and called, then gave certain orders, and in a few minutes a fine black boy dressed in white clothes, came on deck with a tray containing some cold meat and bread baked in the galley and a bottle and a glass and a jug of cold water. I helped myself to a second mate's nip of rum, and felt a new man; and whilst I ate some cold meat and bread I talked to the captain, who made short excursions fore and aft in front of me, as I sat on the skylight.

"What was your rating aboard your ship?" he asked.

"Third mate," I replied.

"Do you understand navigation?"

"Very well," I answered.

"Look here," said he. "This is what I've got in my mind. We're bound to New York, and I'm not going to let that beautiful schooner go adrift, and either founder or be salved by some one who knows his bit as a sailor. If

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I send my second mate on board that schooner to navigate her to New York, will you act in his place ?”

“With great pleasure,” I replied.

“Right!” he gravely exclaimed. “Three men and the second mate should carry that beautiful little ship safely to New York. It might mean a salving job worth ten thousand dollars, and you’ll be wanting money to buy clothes and get home.”

I showed him the money belonging to the schooner.

“Put that up,” said he, after austere-ly eying it. “They will change it for you at New York. Is the lady your wife ?”

“Not yet,” I replied.

“Then,” said he, “you’ll act as my second mate, and mine and three men will carry the schooner to New York.”

“Yes, sir, and I’m very much obliged to you.”

The crew of the barque were called aft, and three men volunteered, and went into the fore-castle for their clothes. The second mate was a young American seaman hailing from Boston. I told him that he would require a compass, and recommended him to take his sextant, though one of the schooner’s cabins would supply further needs. Half an hour later the sun was shining on two vessels sailing along side by side. I stood at the rail watching the little ship as she drove buoyant under her flashing wings, and I marveled at the scenes, sights, and sensations I had witnessed and suffered on board of her ; and once again I thanked God for our miraculous deliverance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOME.

WE are no longer at sea but ashore. We have safely arrived at New York. We have crossed the Western Ocean in a Cunard steamboat, and we are now bound to London town in an express train that left Liverpool at a convenient hour. We are ashore then, and after so much damp the reader will expect to find it dry.

On the contrary it was raining hard. The soot of London as we approached Euston Station blackened the driving lines of rain, and the smell of the North of London was all about. Belle and I were alone in a compartment of the carriage. I am wrong; opposite sat one who cannot be described as a stranger; he had a hangman's face, and looked rugged with evil knowledge. He was the monkey, and I had tried to sell him at New York, but he would not be sold. With preternatural instincts, superior to anything I ever heard of in a dog, he escaped from his purchaser and found his way to our quarters. He bowed, chattered, cut capers, ran on all fours, stood upright, and rushing up on to my shoulder he grasped me by the hair of my head, and Belle said: "He does not mean to part with us." So there he sat opposite, a vestige of shipwreck, half asleep, with dirty fallow skins of lids scarcely closed.

"We are not far from London now, Belle," said I. "I shall drive at once to my people."

"I feel fearfully nervous," said Belle. "This meeting with your parents may be pleasant to you, but if they make

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me uncomfortable it will be the most awful part of the loss of the *Glendower*."

"Shall I take you to your uncle's first of all?"

"No, it is right that we should go straight to your people. They will expect it, and it is due to them."

"I hope they are all right," said I. "I am sorry I did not think of sending a despatch from Liverpool. It is dreadful to drive up full of expectation, with luggage on the top of your cab and the imbecility and the impertinence of a monkey beside you, to find the house to let and the old people dead."

"People don't die so quickly," said Belle. "You talk as if we had been away for years and years."

I sank into a fit of gloomy meditation from which I was rescued by the train running us alongside the platform at Euston Square. We got out. A porter took charge of our luggage. We had but little. We entered one of the distressful old cabs of those days, and I told the hoarse and barely sober cabman to drive us to Hammersmith, and I gave him the address. He breathed a whole public-house into the window in asking the question "Where to," and "Did we know it was a long drive?" I answered that I knew London better than he. He fell back with a purple leer, and got upon his box, making much of wrapping himself up.

Belle said—"He is tipsy."

"They always are," I answered; "and so should I be if I was a London cabman."

The monkey in the opposite seat looked out of the window seemed to recognize something familiar in the scene of wet streets and headlong umbrellas, and many shops lighted by gas, their windows thick with mist that utterly eclipsed the goods on show, although the sun was supposed to be standing somewhere high in the heavens. All traces of shipwreck had disappeared out of Belle's face, and she looked the sweetest, gladdest, best-humored little woman

that ever man took to his heart. She wore a dress that had been made for her in New York, and her hat was of New York, and I can tell you that everything was very smart, and fitted her as her charming, swelling figure deserved to be fitted.

"They are sure to have received your letter, Walter," said she.

"I could do no more than post it," I answered.

"I want it to happen that we should be expected—I mean," said she, "to take them unawares might be a shock and aggravate matters."

"Depend upon it, they have got my letter. We follow the mails by a week, so they will have had plenty of time to think things over."

Thus we talked, but not very much, nor to the point; for conversation was excessively difficult in that dice-box of a cab. The streets of London were horribly stony in those days, and not only did our cab rattle our bones, but all other bones which passed or went with us were rattled in an uproar that sometimes came very near the thunder of a heavy squall of wind. Sloppily, muddily, with the leisure of squinting drink which pulls the reins by instinct, and whose scourge is mocked by the hack, we made our way to Hammersmith; and after the cabman had shouted to people on the pavement, and stopped at four or five wrong houses, we drew up at last at my father's home, the house in which I had bidden them farewell when I made the voyage I have written about.

A semi-detached house; genteel; a villa, not so very new either; its long front garden had a dark green churchyard look, rich, fat and unpleasant, the gift of the soot and atmosphere of the innumerable roofs of the metropolis. The cabman got down; I got out and helped Belle to descend, the monkey jumped out, he was in his native costume of the forest, and was unconnected to us by even the lightest tie: had he bolted I should not have mourned, but he

knew better, and followed me like a dog. Our luggage was so small that the cabman was able to carry the whole of it. It had ceased to rain. We made our way, cabman and monkey included, to the side entrance door, and as we approached I saw in the window of the drawing-room that overlooked the lawn the spectral shapes of my father and mother.

Instantly the shadow of my father disappeared, and exhibited itself as the old familiar figure I had taken leave of not long before, whilst he stood holding the door to let us in.

It is hard to describe a home-coming of this sort. You have the drunken cabman, with a purple leer and hoarse voice, who asks you for two-and-sixpence more than his lawful fare, who puts his face close to you in defiance, and breathes the signs of the Euston Road upon you if you do not pay him quickly. My mother had shrieked when she fell upon my neck, and had yelled, and run away when the monkey had shot into the house, to the amazement of my father, who cried at the open door: "What is that wild beast?" However, we got rid of the cabman, and then after all needful greeting we bundled into the drawing-room, where I put the monkey upon a chair, and shook my fist at him, which seemed "to answer," as they say at sea.

"Did you get my letter from New York?" were the first words I asked my father.

"Yes," said my mother, replying for him, "and very much shocked and terrified we were by the news it contained, and we were also very grateful for its good news. Oh, what a miraculous deliverance! What a wonderful preservation! I always predicted after the pond in Bouville that you were not born to be drowned. And this is Belle, your wife!" looking at Belle and her clothes with kind but most searching eyes, and then approaching her with outstretched hands. "You, dear, are the Belle who

did not come to tea at Bouville, whose vision Walter saw on the pedestal in the pond, and whose life's history, Walter," she added, turning to my father, "was, as I used often to say, destined to be written in the same book with that of our son. I cannot wonder that he should have married you." And she took Belle's hands and kissed her most graciously and kindly.

My father looked on with a face of astonishment. He often glanced at the monkey, who as often looked back at him. All this time we stood.

"Let us sit down," said my father, rather sensibly. "It was a dreadful shipwreck. The news has not long reached this country, and evidently through you from New York."

"Come up-stairs, Belle," said my mother. "You will be tired out after your long journey from America."

I was left alone with my father. He continued to regard me as if astonishment must still be the first emotion with him, and then he said: "So you are married?"

"Yes," I answered.

"You were married in New York then?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you bring her here and introduce her to us first?"

"It was the right and proper thing for me to do, father. She is the sweetest, dearest and truest girl in the world, brave as a lion in shipwreck, tender as a dove as wife and sweetheart. My wife she is, and I am proud of her."

The blood was in my cheeks, and I earnestly hoped that he was not going to say anything to distress me.

"But can you get properly married in America?" he asked.

"Certainly," I answered.

"People are very easily divorced there," he said, "which does not look as if the bonds forged at the American altar are very secure."

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"Belle is my wife," said I, "and the devil couldn't make it otherwise."

"Well, yes, that's very right," said my father in a rather lofty way that reminded me of Dodson in his "Why not?" manner. "And I am thankful to God that you should have been preserved to your mother and to me. But how on earth are you going to support a wife, and of course children, as a third mate on a pound a month?"

"Something will have to be done," said I gloomily. "I will have to go into that."

"You know, Walter," said my father a little too superiorly, considering this was my first appearance after a fearful shipwreck, "that I was willing to do anything I could to advance your interests, but my means are small, and it is out of my power to support two families."

"I shall not call upon you to support any family of mine," said I.

"Has she any relations in this country?"

"An uncle, a Mr. Stubbs, a rich American who lives in the neighborhood of Hyde Park."

"Ought not he to be made acquainted with her safe arrival," said my father after a pause, "as he's the only relation, and rich, as you say."

"She wrote to him from New York as I did to you."

"I'm a rather peculiar man," exclaimed my father getting up, and taking a few steps with a little excitement. "It seems to me that Mr. Stubbs will consider it due from us that we should apprise him without delay of his niece's safe arrival. We dine in the course of an hour, and it will be impossible to ask him to dinner. But he might be willing to drive down this evening and see his niece, and have a chat. I am a rather peculiar man in my ideas. I will write to him at once, and send it by hand."

He sat down to a little well-remembered writing-desk in the window, and wrote a letter to Mr Stubbs, giving him

the news, and inviting him to spend the evening if he was disengaged. I gave him the address, and he rang the bell, and told the housemaid to request John, the boy who worked in the garden, to take a cab to Hyde Park, and leave the letter at the address upon it.

"This I consider the right thing to do," said he when the maid was gone. "That's a very quiet monkey of yours."

"He's old, and having found a soft job means to stick to it," I answered.

"Did you lose all your clothes?"

"All, and so did Belle."

"Is it very usual for young shipwrecked people who have lost all their clothes to get married at the first opportunity?" he asked.

"She'll not be a burden to you, father," I answered, and again I felt the blood in my face.

But he must still insist on being superior, and on making me think him more and more like Dodson in his "Why not?" mood.

"Pray," he asked, "how did you manage for money in New York, since, I presume, you arrived there without clothes and penniless?"

"I told you all about the schooner and the *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, didn't I?"

He nodded. "The master of the *Nathaniel Hawthorne*," I continued, "was a man named Abraham Hockings, and he proved one of the kindest friends I ever made or ever hope to make. He took us to his home, and hospitably entertained us, and introduced us to a number of people, all of whom were interested in us and our story, and disposed to assist us in any way. Captain Hockings said to me soon after our arrival: 'We have salvaged the schooner, and she will prove good money. You may not want to stop here till the matter is settled. I have gone over the cargo with competent hands, and I am willing to offer you

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1500 dollars for your share in the whole ship.' He paid me the money," said I, "and we bought what we needed, and after staying a little to see the sights, we took the steamer to Liverpool, and here we are."

"And how much money have you brought with you?" asked my father.

"Nearly a hundred pounds," I answered.

His face relaxed, he almost smiled.

"Why," said he, "this is truly making a profit of shipwreck. You have more than recovered the value of your clothes and your wages. When shall you call upon the owners of the ship?"

"Possibly to-morrow. But I don't mean to tear my shirt. I have had enough of ships and shipowners, and intend to give up the sea."

"Then what will you do?"

"Oh, there's always a vacant hole for a man to creep into, although the board seems crowded with wriggling things, every one boring tooth and nail with the fang of hunger and necessity into the next wriggler's tail. I shall do, and I shall support my wife, and I shall go to Australia to do it, for there she has an aunt, and an aunt who is certain to find me a good berth ashore, because she is a well-to-do woman, and moves in the best circles in Sydney, and Colonial society is very fastidious, and Belle's husband must be a gentleman."

"Well," said my father, after viewing me thoughtfully, "I am not surprised at your determination to give up the sea. I never could understand the fascination it possessed for you, but boys will be boys, and out of a little boat a boy will get more travel, more imagination, more romance, than after he becomes a man, the loftiest ship or the largest steamer will yield him."

He was now falling into a mood of commonplace, and I was not sorry to hear my mother's voice on the staircase outside. She and Belle came into the room, and my

mother walking right up to me exclaimed in a low voice :

"I have fallen in love with your wife, and think her a very sweet girl."

I muttered some thanks.

"Do not speak of like, I already *love* her," and she turned round to contemplate her as she stood speaking to my father. I have never insisted much upon my daisy's beauty, because I think it is an impertinence to be constantly thrusting such matters—eyes, lips, hair, nose—upon the reader's attention. But I will say that I was very proud of her. I viewed her with great delight as she conversed with animation, telling my father the story of the monkey, how he swam from the reef, after us, and how he mysteriously came on board of us on the island. Her face glowed, her moist lip pouted, she often glanced at me. I believe that neither my father nor my mother took long to discover that though we had been husband and wife for some weeks we were still profoundly in love. It then occurred to me to tell Belle that Mr Stubbs had been sent for.

"I hope he will be able to come," she exclaimed eagerly. "He is a man who can do a great deal for us in Australia."

She had before said this to me in private, and she now said it aloud for my father's information.

"He was a member of the House of Assembly," she continued, looking at my father, "and was one of the richest squatters in the Colony. He lost his wife, which broke down his spirits, and as he was without children he decided on returning to the old country. He sold his estate, but at a loss, I believe, yet that loss still leaves him a rich man."

"And a kindly man?" said my father.

"The dearest of men!" exclaimed Belle.

My father's face wore a grave air of satisfaction. His mouth was a little curled, indeed, he seemed delighted at

seeing us, and we sat chatting over Bouville, and the photography, and incidents of the disastrous voyage till the dinner was announced, and we entered the parlor at the back of the drawing-room.

A well-draped dinner table is a pleasant sight. My father's silver was good, and he was a little choicer in his glass, and I exchanged a look with my mother when I saw at the place assigned to me at table the silver spoon and fork I had pledged for the gun. They had not expected us, and therefore had not prepared a welcome, and I was not a little pleased to find that the dinner consisted of salmon, lamb, hashed chicken, and jam roly-polly pudding, with nuts for the monkey, and a small dessert. All this I thought did not show like the end of a long voyage, and although my father, who was a rather peculiar man, had never admitted me into his confidence, so that I had no knowledge of the amount of his capital or the extent of his income, I could not but think that his means were not wholly inadequate to supplying him and my mother with their few simple wants as old age crawled down upon them.

Belle was very vivacious at dinner. She graphically related the story of our swim ashore. She spoke of the dead bodies washing upon the reef, and she drew a picture of the wreck in two pieces.

"What an awful scene!" cried my mother, laying down her knife and fork. "The half of a ship on fire, and you two swimming in water boiling with foam lighted up by the fearful blaze."

"People do not realize these things as they sit at home, Walter," she added, addressing her husband, and my father certainly was a person who did not. Then Belle talked of New York, and charmed them with her lively description of that city. Indeed I had no idea that the little woman could talk so well. She was the star of that dinner, and was much brighter than the lamplight by

which we dined. We sat a long time talking at table. There was indeed a very great deal to say. It was not as if some steamer we were in had snapped a piston-rod or damaged her machinery betwixt Dover and Calais, so that she drifted for six hours in a helpless state amidst the devotions of the foreigners and the curses of the beef-eaters. We had something more to talk about, and indeed, though not very much of it is made in these pages, the total loss of the *Glendower* on the Rocas off the coast of Brazil is one of the most memorable shipwrecks in the annals.

As all four of us were leisurely passing into the drawing-room, full of talk, the hall bell was rung and the house door thundered on.

"This will be Mr. Stubbs," said my father.

It was no other. His house up the Bayswater Road was not so very far off. Something of the roughness of his appearance was moderated by his evening dress. Yet he looked grim and real as a man as he was shown in, as one who has tasted in his struggling days that cup of poverty which dries the blood and diminishes the size of the heart, and paints early crowsfeet against the eyes. Belle rushed to him, and if he looked rough and stern, I can say that no father could have embraced his child with more tenderness than this uncle embraced my wife. She introduced him to my father and mother. Then he shook hands with me, and offered me his congratulations on my marriage in two or three sentences which were very well turned, and flowed very easily from him.

"I was going to the theater with a friend," he said: "but I preferred to come and see you, Belle. Oh yes, I received your letter from New York, and marveled over your adventures, and I thank you, sir," said he, with a bow to my father, "for immediately acquainting me with my niece's arrival at your house."

And now the *Glendower* was to be wrecked over again, and we were to lose all our clothes and be in dire poverty.

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He was astonished that Bowser should have gone so far to the westward, and said :

“I guess you and Belle will be the only two survivors.”

“I don’t think those seven men in a boat came off with their lives,” said I. “It blew fearfully hard that night.”

“The account,” said he, “is to hand from your mouth as deposed by you at New York. I read it in the *Times*, and at once communicated with your aunt, Belle, so that she should not be kept in suspense by the delay of a single mail.”

“We are returning to Australia,” said I ; “and Belle will be able to report herself.”

“He means to give up the sea,” said my father.

“He is quite right !” exclaimed Mr. Stubbs.

“I do not choose that he should be a sailor,” said Belle.

“We are going to Australia, where Aunt Riley shall find us a position which will keep us happy for the rest of our lives.”

He smiled at her very thoughtfully, and began to stroke his shaggy beard. I caught my father eying him wistfully, and my mother seemed to look a little knowingly upon the carpet. We talked for a time in the drawing-room, and then went into the parlor, which was rigged up for grog. Neither my mother nor Belle objected to the delightful fragrance of tobacco. Presently Mr. Stubbs said to Belle—

“Do you ever remember your mother speaking of Mr. Dines of Wally-Hoolie ?”

“No,” she answered.

“You must have forgotten ; he was very well acquainted with your father, who often shot with him. Your mother was very fond of him. “Dines,” said Mr. Stubbs, “Dines of Wally-Hoolie” “Did your mother never speak of him ?”

Belle stared hard, intently thinking.

“Dines, Belle ?” I said.

My mother began to laugh.

"The mere iteration of words does not help the memory," said my father. "Can't you connect him with your niece's mind by some incident, Mr. Stubbs?" and I thought he talked a little anxiously, as though Dines now became an important condition of my marriage with Belle.

"What are you doing to-morrow evening, Belle?" said Mr. Stubbs.

"What do you want me to do, uncle?"

"Will you and your husband dine with me, and I will introduce you to Mr. Dines, who happens to be in this country. He sails for Australia in about three weeks. I believe, sir," he said, turning upon me, "that Mr. Dines is more likely to prove of use to you in the colony than Mrs. Riley."

"I don't care who does it, so long as we get a good position made," said Belle.

My mother laughed again, and my father smiled.

"Indeed," continued Belle, looking at me gravely, "I do not think that Walter would have married me if it had not been that I had promised to find him a berth in Australia."

"*This*, Mr. Stubbs," said I with indignation, "is the gratitude that a man receives from a young woman, not only for proposing to her and wedding her, but for saving her life."

Belle rushed up to me and kissed me, and Mr. Stubbs, who might have been a man prone to take a literal view of things, saw how it was, and blew his cloud and drank his grog.

Next day I traveled as far as Limehouse, no mean journey from Hammersmith, to report myself to the owner of the *Glendower*, and to hand over the watch and chain which I had removed from the body of the second mate on the reef. Old Mr. Burton, the owner, was a great fat jolly man, who died soon after the loss of his ship, worth

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about two millions. He was a shipowner of the old sort ; his vessels belonged to him ; he was not a company. He took a paternal interest in his craft, many of which were fine, noble ships, all sailing out of the Thames, and he starved his seamen on the famine scale of 1844. But he gave them rum. The managing owner of to-day starves them still, and denies them rum, but as his seamen are nearly all foreigners, nobody cares.

I was immediately admitted to Mr. Burton's presence, and he uplifted his eyes, and seemed very much affected whilst I related the story of the wreck ; but as he was handsomely insured, and as all the passengers were strangers to him, and as the interest he took in his captain and officers was of the usual shipowning sort, his professions of pain, his soup-like gasps, did not impress me as the expressions of a sincere mind.

When I had done my business at Limehouse, I returned forthwith to Hammersmith.

Mr. Stubbs lived in a fine house near Hyde Park. He was a widower and childless, and his friends wondered that he should burden himself with the obligations of a landlord and servants and the knavish complications of the area, when he could have lived like a prince, without domestic anxiety, at a good hotel at a quarter the cost. But I afterwards heard that he was a philanthropist, and used his rooms for the reception of classes of young men and women. I never should have thought from his appearance that he was a pious man, and not once had Belle given me a hint as to her uncle's taste and practise of combining with other good people to mold the character of young men and women on the basis of the Christian idea.

Mr. Dines was present when we arrived, and I easily saw that we had been the subject of conversation. He was a bald, hearty, comfortable man, with a scissors-trimmed beard, and he spoke in the language of one who

has cultivated letters. He was greatly taken by Belle, to whom he talked of her father and mother, to her great pleasure. But it was not until after dinner—and a royal dinner it was—that we came to business. We were in the smoking-room, and Belle was present, and Mr. Dines, suddenly turning to me, said—

“Mr. Stubbs tells me you are going to Australia with your wife to obtain a situation there. I have told my friend I shall be very glad to help you by the immediate offer of a berth, not only for his sake, but for the sake of your wife, in memory of her parents, who were my friends.”

“Indeed, you are very kind,” I said, bowing again and again, and Belle went to him and gave him her hand, which he held, whilst he told her that the berth he offered was worth £400 a year to begin with, and he added that as he was sailing in the *Devonshire* in the course of three weeks, he would be very glad if we went to Australia in that ship.

“Few shipwrecked people make a better ending,” said I, and we talked of the loss of the *Glendower*, and the human chance in the great, glowing Colony to which we were bound, and many other matters did we talk about until the clock struck eleven, at which hour Mr. Stubbs’ carriage was announced, for it was time for us to go.

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